Bestseller Mystery

The CASE BOOK of Ellery Queen

Ellery Queen, Master Detective of books, radio and screen

"No. 1 on the 'Who-Dun-It' Hit Parade."

LIFE *Magazine*

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The
CASE BOOK
of
ELLERY QUEEN

LAWRENCE E. SPIVAK
Publisher

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The Author wishes to express his gratitude to *The American Magazine*, *Mystery*, *Red Book* and *Blue Book* for permission to include certain stories which appeared in their publications. The radio stories were originally broadcast by N.B.C.

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Bestseller Mystery, No. B59 . . . 570 Lexington Avenue, New York City 22, Manufactured in the United States of America.

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The Adventure of
THE HOUSE OF DARKNESS

"AND THIS," proclaimed Monsieur Dieudonné Duval with a deprecatory twirl of his mustache, "is of an ingenuity incomparable, my friend. It is not I that should say so, perhaps. But examine it. Is it not the — how do you say — the pip?"

Mr. Ellery Queen wiped his neck and sat down on a bench facing the little street of amusements. "It is indeed," he sighed, "the pip, my dear Duval. I quite share your creative enthusasim. . . . Djuna, for the love of mercy! Sit still." The afternoon sun was tropical and his whites had long since begun to cling.

"Let's go on it," suggested Djuna hopefully.

"Let's not and say we did," groaned Mr. Queen, stretching his weary legs. He had promised Djuna this lark all summer, but he had failed to reckon with the Law of Diminishing Returns. He had already — under the solicitous wing of Monsieur Duval, that tireless demon of the scenic-designing art; one of the variegated hundreds of his amazing acquaintanceship — partaken of the hectic allurements of Joyland Amusement Park for two limb-rending hours, and they had taken severe toll of his energy. Djuna, of course, what with excitement, sheer pleasure, and indefatigable youth, was a law unto himself; he was still as fresh as the breeze blowing in from the sea.

"You will find it of the most amusing," said Monsieur Duval eagerly, showing his white teeth. "It is my *chef-d'oeuvre* in Joyland." Joyland was something new to the county, a model amusement park meticulously landscaped and offering a variety of ingenious entertainments and mechanical divertissements — planned chiefly by Duval — not to be duplicated anywhere along the Atlantic. "A house of darkness. . . . That, my friend, was an inspiration!"

"I think it's swell," said Djuna craftily, glancing at Ellery.

"A mild word, Djun'," said Mr. Queen, wiping his neck again. *The House of Darkness* which lay across the thoroughfare did not look too diverting to a gentleman of even catholic tastes. It was a composite of all the haunted houses of fact and fiction. A diabolic imagination had planned its crazy walls and tumbledown roofs. It reminded Ellery — although he was tactful enough not to mention it to Monsieur Duval — of a set out of a German motion picture he had once seen, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.* It wound and leaned and stuck out fantastically and had broken false windows and doors and decrepit balconies. Nothing was normal or decent. Constructed in a huge rectangle, its three wings overlooked a court which had been fashioned into a nightmarish little street with broken cobbles and tired lampposts; and its fourth side was occupied by the ticket-booth and a railing. The street in the open court was at-

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mosphere only; the real dirty work, thought Ellery disconsolately, went on behind those grim surrealistic walls.

"*Alors*," said Monsieur Duval, rising, "if it is permitted that I excuse myself? For a moment only. I shall return. Then we shall visit . . . *Pardon!*" He bowed his trim little figure away and went quickly toward the booth, near which a young man in park uniform was haranguing a small group.

Mr. Queen sighed and closed his eyes. The park was never crowded; but on a hot summer's afternoon it was almost deserted, visitors preferring the adjoining bath-houses and beach. The camouflaged loudspeakers concealed all over the park played dance-music to almost empty aisles and walks.

"That's funny," remarked Djuna, crunching powerfully upon a pink, conic section of popcorn.

"Eh?" Ellery opened a bleary eye.

"I wonder where *he's* goin'. 'N awful hurry."

"Who?" Ellery opened the other eye and followed the direction of Djuna's absent nod. A man with a massive body and thick gray hair was striding purposefully along up the walk. He wore a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes and dark clothes, and his heavy face was raw with perspiration. There was something savagely decisive in his bearing.

"Ouch," murmured Ellery with a wince. "I sometimes wonder where people get the energy."

"Funny, all right," mumbled Djuna, munching.

"Most certainly is," said Ellery sleepily, closing his eyes again. "You've put your finger on a nice point, my lad. Never occurred to me before, but it's true that there's something unnatural in a man's hurrying in an amusement park of a hot afternoon. Chap might be the White Rabbit, eh, Djuna? Running about so. But the *genus* Joylander is, like all such orders, a family of inveterate strollers. Well, well! A distressing problem." He yawned.

"He must be crazy," said Djuna.

"No, no, my son, that's the conclusion of a sloppy thinker. The proper deduction begins with the observation that Mr. Rabbit hasn't come to Joyland to dabble in the delights of Joyland *per se*, if you follow me. Joyland is, then, merely a means to an end. In a sense Mr. Rabbit — note the cut of his wrinkled clothes, Djuna; he's a distinguished bunny — is oblivious to Joyland. It doesn't exist for him. He barges past *Dante's Inferno* and the perilous *Dragon-Fly* and the popcorn and frozen custard as if he is blind or they're invisible. . . . The diagnosis? A date, I should say, with a lady. And the gentleman is late. *Quod erat demonstrandum*. . . . Now for heaven's sake, Djuna, eat your petrified shoddy and leave me in peace."

"It's all gone," said Djuna wistfully, looking at the empty bag.

"I am here!" cried a gay Gallic voice, and Ellery suppressed another groan at the

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vision of Monsieur Duval bouncing toward them. "Shall we go, my friends? I promise you entertainment of the most divine . . . *Ouf!*" Monsieur Duval expelled his breath violently and staggered backward. Ellery sat up in alarm. But it was only the massive man with the slouch hat, who had collided with the dapper little Frenchman, almost upsetting him, muttered something meant to be conciliatory, and hurried on. "*Cochon,*" said Monsieur Duval softly, his black eyes glittering. Then he shrugged his slim shoulders and looked after the man.

"Apparently," said Ellery dryly, "our White Rabbit can't resist the lure of your *chef-d'oeuvre,* Duval. I believe he's stopped to listen to the blandishments of your barker!"

"White Rabbit?" echoed the Frenchman, puzzled. "But yes, he is a customer. *Voilà!* One does not fight with such, *hein?* Come, my friends!"

The massive man had halted abruptly in his tracks and pushed into the thick of the group listening to the attendant. Ellery sighed, and rose, and they strolled across the walk.

The young man was saying confidentially: "Ladies and gentlemen, you haven't visited Joyland if you haven't visited *The House of Darkness.* There's never been a thrill like it! It's new, different. Nothing like it in any amusement park in the *world!* It's grim. It's shivery. It's terrifying. . . ."

A tall young woman in front of them laughed and said to the old gentleman leaning on her arm: "Oh, daddy, let's try it! It's sure to be loads of fun." Ellery saw the white head under its Leghorn nod with something like amusement, and the young woman edged forward through the crowd, eagerly. The old man did not release her arm. There was a curious stiffness in his carriage, a slow shuffle in his walk, that puzzled Ellery. The young woman purchased two tickets at the booth and led the old man along a fenced lane inside.

"*The House of Darkness,*" the young orator was declaiming in a dramatic whisper, "is . . . just . . . that. There's not a light you can see by in the whole place! You have to feel your way, and if you aren't *feeling* well . . . ha, ha! Pitch-dark. Ab-solutely *black* . . . I see the gentleman in the brown tweeds is a little frightened. Don't be afraid. We've taken care of even the faintest-hearted ——"

"Ain't no sech thing," boomed an indignant bass voice from somewhere in the van of the crowd. There was a mild titter. The faint-heart addressed by the attendant was a powerful young Negro, attired immaculately in symphonic brown, his straw skimmer dazzling against the sooty carbon of his skin. A pretty colored girl giggled on his arm. "C'mon, honey, we'll show 'em! Heah — two o' them theah tickets, Mistuh!" The pair beamed as they hurried after the tall young woman and her father.

"You could wander around in the dark inside," cried the young man enthusiastically, "for *hours* looking for the way out. But if you can't stand the suspense there's

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a little green arrow, every so often along the route, that points to an invisible door, and you just go through that door and you'll find yourself in a dark passage that runs *all* around the house in the back and leads to the — uh-ghostly cellar, the assembly-room, downstairs there. Only *don't* go out any of those green-arrow doors unless you want to *stay* out, because they open only one way—into the hall, ha, ha! You can't get back into *The House of Darkness* proper again, you see. But nobody uses that *easy* way out. Everybody follows the little *red* arrows. . . ."

A man with a full, rather untidy black beard, shabby broad-brimmed hat, a soft limp tie, and carrying a flat case which looked like an artist's box, purchased a ticket and hastened down the lane. His cheek bones were flushed with self-consciousness as he ran the gauntlet of curious eyes.

"Now what," demanded Ellery, "is the idea of *that*, Duval?"

"The arrows?" Monsieur Duval smiled apologetically. "A concession to the old, the infirm, and the apprehensive. It is really of the most blood-curdling, my masterpiece, Mr. Queen. So —" He shrugged. "I have planned a passage to permit of exit at any time. Without it one could, as the admirable young man so truly says, wander about for hours. The little green and red arrows are non-luminous; they do not disturb the blackness."

The young man asserted: "But if you follow the red arrows you are bound to come out. Some of them go the right way, others don't. But eventually . . . After exciting adventures on the way. . . . Now, ladies and gentlemen, for the price of —"

"Come on," panted Djuna, overwhelmed by this salesmanship. "Boy, I bet that's *fun*."

"I bet," said Ellery gloomily as the crowd began to shuffle and mill about. Monsieur Duval smiled with delight and with a gallant bow presented two tickets.

"I shall await you, my friends, here," he announced. "I am most curious to hear of your reactions to my little *maison des ténèbres*. Go," he chuckled, "with God."

As Ellery grunted, Djuna led the way in prancing haste down the fenced lane to a door set at an insane angle. An attendant took the tickets and pointed a solemn thumb over his shoulder. The light of day struggled down a flight of tumbledown steps. "Into the crypt, eh?" muttered Ellery. "Ah, the young man's 'ghostly cellar.' Dieudonné, I could cheerfully strangle you!"

They found themselves in a long narrow cellar-like chamber dimly illuminated by bulbs festooned with spurious spider-webs. The chamber had a dank appearance and crumbly walls, and it was presided over by a courteous skeleton who took Ellery's Panama, gave him a brass disc, and deposited the hat in one of the partitions of a long wooden rack. Most of the racks were empty, although Ellery noticed the artist's box in one of the partitions and the white-haired old man's Leghorn in another. The rite was somehow ominous, and Djuna shivered with ecstatic anticipation. An iron grating

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divided the cellar in two, and Ellery reasoned that visitors to the place emerged after their adventures into the division beyond the grating, redeemed their checked belongings through the window in the grate, and climbed to blessed daylight through another stairway in the righthand wing.

"Come *on*," said Djuna again, impatiently. "Gosh, you're slow. Here's the way in." And he ran toward a crazy door on the left which announced *Entrance*. Suddenly he halted and waited for Ellery, who was ambling reluctantly along behind. "I saw him," he whispered.

"Eh? Whom?"

"*Him*. The Rabbit!"

Ellery started. "Where?"

"He just went inside there." Djuna's passionate gamin-eyes narrowed. "Think he's got his date in *here?*"

"Pesky queer place to have one, I'll confess," murmured Ellery, eyeing the crazy door with misgivings. "And yet logic . . . Now, Djuna, it's no concern of ours. Let's take our punishment like men and get the devil out of here. I'll go first."

"I wanna go first!"

"Over my dead body. I promised Dad Queen I'd bring you back — er — alive. Hold on to my coat — tightly, now! Here we go."

What followed is history. The Queen clan, as Inspector Richard Queen has often pointed out, is made of the stuff of heroes. And yet while Ellery was of the unpolluted and authentic blood, it was not long before he was feeling his way with quivering desperation and wishing himself at least a thousand light-years away.

The place was fiendish. From the moment they stepped through the crazy doorway to fall down a flight of padded stairs and land with a gentle bump on something which squealed hideously and fled from beneath them, they knew the tortures of the damned. There was no conceivable way of orienting themselves; they were in the deepest, thickest, blackest darkness Ellery had ever had the misfortune to encounter. All they could do was grope their way, one shrinking foot at a time, and pray for the best. It was literally impossible to see their hands before their faces.

They collided with walls which retaliated ungratefully with an electric shock. They ran into things which were all rattling bones and squeaks. Once they followed a tiny arrow of red light which had no sheen and found a hole in a wall just large enough to admit a human form if its owner crawled like an animal. They were not quite prepared for what they encountered on the other side: a floor which tipped precariously under their weight and, to Ellery's horror, slid them gently downward toward the other side of the room — if it was a room — and through a gap to a padded floor three feet below. . . . Then there was the incident of the flight of steps which made you mount rapidly and get nowhere, since the steps were on a treadmill going the other

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way; the wall which fell on your head; the labyrinth where the passage was just wide enough for a broad man's shoulders and just high enough for a gnome walking erect; the grating which blew blasts of frigid air up your legs; the earthquake room; and such abodes of pleasantry. And, to frazzle already frayed nerves, the air was filled with rumbles, gratings, clankings, whistlings, crashes and explosions in a symphony of noises which would have done credit to the inmates of Bedlam.

"Some fun, eh, kid?" croaked Ellery feebly, landing on his tail after an unexpected slide. Then he said some unkind things about Monsieur Dieudonné Duval under his breath. "Where are we now?"

"Boy, is it *dark*," said Djuna with satisfaction, clutching Ellery's arm. "I can't see a thing, can you?"

Ellery grunted and began to grope. "This looks promising." His knuckles had rapped on a glassy surface. He felt it all over; it was a narrow panel, but taller than he. There were cracks along the sides which suggested that the panel was a door or window. But search as he might he could find no knob or latch. He bared a blade of his penknife and began to scratch away at the glass, which reason told him must have been smeared with thick opaque paint. But after several minutes of hot work he had uncovered only a faint and miserable sliver of light.

"That's not it," he said wearily. "Glass door or window here, and that pinline of light suggests it opens onto a balcony or something, probably overlooking the court. We'll have to find ——"

"*Ow!*" shrieked Djuna from somewhere behind him. There was a scraping sound, followed by a thud.

Ellery whirled. "For heaven's sake, Djuna, what's the matter?"

The boy's voice wailed from a point close at hand in the darkness. "I was lookin' for how to get out an' — an I slipped on somethin' an' fell!"

"Oh." Ellery sighed with relief. "From the yell you unloosed I thought a banshee had attacked you. Well, pick yourself up. It's not the first fall you've taken in this confounded hole."

"B-but it's *wet*," blubbered Djuna.

"Wet?" Ellery groped toward the anguished voice and seized a quivering hand. "Where?"

"On the f-floor. I got some of it on my hand when I slipped. My other hand. It — it's wet an' sticky an' — an' warm."

"Wet and sticky and wa . . ." Ellery released the boy's hand and dug about in his clothes until he found his tiny pencil-flashlight. He pressed the button with the most curious feeling of drama. There was something tangibly unreal, and yet, final, in the darkness. Djuna panted by his side. . . .

It was a moderately sane door with only a suggestion of cubistic outline, a low lintel,

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and a small knob. The door was shut. Something semi-liquid and dark red in color stained the floor, emanating from the other side of the crack.

"Let me see your hand," said Ellery tonelessly. Djuna, staring, tendered a small thin fist. Ellery turned it over and gazed at the palm. It was scarlet. He raised it to his nostrils and sniffed. Then he took out his handkerchief almost absently and wiped the scarlet away. "Well! That hasn't the smell of paint, eh, Djuna? And I scarcely think Duval would have so far let enthusiasm run away with better sense as to pour anything else on the floor as atmosphere." He spoke soothingly, divided between the stained floor and the dawning horror on Djuna's face. "Now, now, son. Let's open this door."

He shoved. The door stirred a half-inch, stuck. He set his lips and rammed, pushing with all his strength. There was something obstructing the door, something large and heavy. It gave way stubbornly, an inch at a time. . . .

He blocked Djuna's view deliberately, sweeping the flashlight's thin finger about the room disclosed by the opening of the door. It was perfectly octagonal, devoid of fixtures. Just eight walls, a floor, and a ceiling. There were two other doors besides the one in which he stood. Over one there was a red arrow, over the other a green. Both doors were shut. . . . Then the light swept sidewise and down to the door he had pushed open, seeking the obstruction.

The finger of light touched something large and dark and shapeless on the floor, and quite still. It sat doubled up like a jackknife, rump to the door. The finger fixed itself on four blackish holes in the middle of the back, from which a ragged cascade of blood had gushed, soaking the coat on its way to the floor.

Ellery growled something to Djuna and knelt, raising the head of the figure. It was the massive White Rabbit, and he was dead.

When Mr. Queen rose he was pale and abstracted. He swept the flash slowly about the floor. A trail of red led to the dead man from across the room. Diagonally opposite lay a short-barreled revolver. The smell of powder still lay heavily over the room.

"Is he — is he — ?" whispered Djuna.

Ellery grabbed the boy's arm and hustled him back into the room they had just left. His flashlight illuminated the glass door on whose surface he had scratched. He kicked high, and the glass shivered as the light of day rushed in. Hacking out an aperture large enough to permit passage of his body, he wriggled past the broken glass and found himself on one of the fantastic little balconies overlooking the open inner court of *The House of Darkness*. A crowd was collecting below, attracted by the crash of falling glass. He made out the dapper figure of Monsieur Duval by the ticket booth, in agitated conversation with a khaki-clad special officer, one of the regular Joyland police.

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"Duval!" he shouted. "Who's come out of the *House*?"

"Eh?" gulped the little Frenchman.

"Since I went in? Quick, man, don't stand there gaping!"

"Who has come out?" Monsieur Duval licked his lips, staring up with scared black eyes. "But no one has come out, Mr. Queen. . . . What is it that is the matter? Have you — your head — the sun ——"

"Good!" yelled Ellery. "Then he's still in this confounded labyrinth. Officer, send in an alarm for the regular county police. See that nobody leaves. Arrest 'em as soon as they try to come out. A man has been murdered up here!"

The note, in a woman's spidery scrawl said: "Darling Anse — I *must* see you. It's important. Meet me at the old place, Joyland, Sunday afternoon, three o'clock, in that House of Darkness. I'll be awfully careful not to be seen. Especially this time. *He suspects.* I don't know what to do. I love you, love you!!! — Madge."

Captain Ziegler of the county detectives cracked his knuckles and barked: "That's the payoff, Mr. Queen. Fished it out of his pocket. Now who's Madge, and who the hell's the guy that 'suspects'? Hubby, d'ye suppose?"

The room was slashed with a dozen beams. Police crisscrossed flashlights in a pattern as bizarre as the shape of the chamber, with the shedding lantern held high by a policeman over the dead man as their focal point. Six people were lined up against one of the eight walls; five of them glared, mesmerized, at the still heap in the center of the rays. The sixth — the white-haired old man, still leaning on the arm of the tall young woman — was looking directly before him.

"Hmm," said Ellery; he scanned the prisoners briefly. "You're sure there's no one else skulking in the *House*, Captain Ziegler?"

"That's the lot of 'em. Mr. Duval had the machinery shut off. He led us through himself, searched every nook and cranny. And, since nobody left this hellhole, the killer must be one o' these six." The detective eyed them coldly; they all flinched — except the old man.

"Duval," murmured Ellery. Monsieur Duval started; he was deadly pale. "There's no 'secret' method of getting out of here unseen?"

"Ah, no, no, Mr. Queen! Here, I shall at once secure a copy of the plans myself, show you . . ."

"Scarcely necessary."

"The — the assembly-chamber is the sole means of emerging," stammered Duval. "Eh, that this should happen to ——"

Ellery said quietly to a dainty woman, somberly gowned, who hugged the wall: "*You're* Madge, aren't you?" He recalled now that she was the only one of the six prisoners he had not seen while listening with Djuna and Monsieur Duval to the ora-

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tion of the barker outside. She must have preceded them all into the *House*. The five others were here — the tall young woman and her odd father, the bearded man with his artist's tie, and the burly young Negro and his pretty mulatto companion. "Your name, please — your last name?"

"I — I'm not Madge," she whispered, edging, shrinking away. There were half-moons of violet shadow under her tragic eyes. She was perhaps thirty-five, the wreck of a once beautiful woman. Ellery got the curious feeling that it was not age, but fear, which had ravaged her.

"That's Dr. Hardy," said the tall young woman suddenly in a choked voice. She gripped her father's arm as if she were already sorry she had spoken.

"Who?" asked Captain Ziegler quickly.

"The . . . dead man. Dr. Anselm Hardy, the eye specialist. Of New York City."

"That's right," said the small quiet man kneeling by the corpse. He tossed something over to the detective. "Here's one of his cards."

"Thanks, Doc. What's *your* name, Miss?"

"Nora Reis." The tall young woman shivered. "This is my father, Matthew Reis. We don't know anything about this — this horrible thing. We've just come out to Joyland today for some fun. If we'd known ——"

"Nora, my dear," said her father gently; but neither his eyes nor his head moved from their fixed position.

"So you know the dead man, hey?" Ziegler's disagreeable face expressed heavy suspicion.

"If I may," said Matthew Reis. There was a soft musical pitch to his voice. "We knew Dr. Hardy, my daughter and I, only in his professional capacity. That's a matter of record, Captain Ziegler. He treated me for over a year. Then he operated upon my eyes." A spasm of pain flickered over his waxy features. "Cataracts, he said . . ."

"Hmm," said Ziegler. "Was it ——"

"I am totally blind."

There was a shocked silence. Ellery shook his head with impatience at his own blindness. He should have known. The old man's helplessness, the queer fixed stare, that vague smile, the shuffling walk. . . . "This Dr. Hardy was responsible for your blindness, Mr. Reis?" he demanded abruptly.

"I didn't say that," murmured the old man. "It was no doubt the hand of God. He did what he could. I have been blind for over two years."

"Did you know Dr. Hardy was here, in this place, today?"

"No. We haven't seen him for two years."

"Where were you people when the police found you?"

Matthew Reis shrugged. "Somewhere ahead. Near the exit, I believe."

"And you?" asked Ellery of the colored couple.

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"M'name is — is," stuttered the Negro, "Juju Jones, suh. Ah'm a prizefighter. Light-heavy, suh. Ah don't know nothin' 'bout this doctuh man. Me an' Jessie we been havin' a high ol' time down yonduh in a room that bounced 'n' jounced all roun'. We been ——"

"Lawd," moaned the pretty mulatto, hanging on to her escort's arm.

"And how about you?" demanded Ellery of the bearded man.

He raised his shoulders in an almost Gallic gesture. "How about me? This is all classical Greek to *me*. I've been out on the rocks at the Point most of the day doing a couple of sea-pictures and a landscape. I'm an artist — James Oliver Adams, at your service." There was something antagonistic, almost sneering, in his attitude. "You'll find my paint-box and sketches in the checkroom downstairs. Don't know this dead creature, and I wish to God I'd never been tempted by this atrocious gargoyle of a place."

"Garg —" gasped Monsieur Duval; he became furious. "Do you know of whom you speak?" he cried, advancing upon the bearded man. "I am Dieudonné Du ——"

"There, there, Duval," said Ellery soothingly. "We don't want to become involved in an altercation between clashing artistic temperaments; not now, anyway. Where were you, Mr. Adams, when the machinery stopped?"

"Somewhere ahead." The man had a harsh cracked voice, as if there was something wrong with his vocal cords. "I was looking for a way out of the hellish place. *I'd* had a bellyful. I ——"

"That's right," snapped Captain Ziegler. "I found this bird myself. He was swearin' to himself like a trooper, stumblin' around in the dark. He says to me: 'How the hell do you get out of here? That barker said you've got to follow the green lights, but they don't get you anywhere except in another silly hole of a monkeyshine room, or somethin' like that. Now why'd you want to get out so fast, Mr. Adams? What do you know? Come on, spill it!"

The artist snorted his disgust, disdaining to reply. He shrugged again and set his shoulders against the wall in an attitude of resignation.

"I should think, Captain," murmured Ellery, studying the faces of the six against the wall, "that you'd be much more concerned with finding the one who 'suspects' in Madge's note. Well, Madge, are you going to talk? It's perfectly silly to hold out. This is the sort of thing that can't be kept secret. Sooner or later ——"

The dainty woman moistened her lips; she looked faint. "I suppose you're right. It's bound to come out," she said in a low empty voice. "I'll talk. Yes, my name *is* Madge — Madge Clarke. It's true. I wrote that note to — to Dr. Hardy." Then her voice flamed passionately. "But I didn't write it of my own free will! *He* made me. It was a trap. I knew it. But I couldn't ——"

"*Who* made you?" growled Captain Ziegler.

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"My husband. Dr. Hardy and I had been friends . . . well, friends, quietly. My husband didn't know at first. Then he — he did come to know. He must have followed us — many times. We — we've met here before. My husband is very jealous. He made me write the note. He threatened to — to kill me if I didn't write it. Now I don't care. Let him! He's a murderer!" And she buried her face in her hands and began to sob.

Captain Ziegler said gruffly: "Mrs. Clarke." She looked up and then down at the snub-nosed revolver in his hand. "Is that your husband's gun?"

She shrank from it, shuddering. "No. He has a revolver, but it's got a long barrel. He's a — a good shot."

"Pawnshop," muttered Ziegler, putting the gun in his pocket; and he nodded gloomily to Ellery.

"You came here, Mrs. Clarke," said Ellery gently, "in the face of your husband's threats?"

"Yes. Yes. I — I couldn't stay away. I thought I'd warn ——"

"That was very courageous. Your husband — did you see him in Joyland, in the crowd before this place?"

"No. I didn't. But it must have been Tom. He *told* me he'd kill Anse!"

"Did you meet Dr. Hardy in here, before he was dead?"

She shivered. "No. I couldn't find ——"

"Did you meet your husband here?"

"No . . ."

"Then where is he?" asked Ellery dryly. "He couldn't have vanished in a puff of smoke. The age of miracles is past. . . . Do you think you can trace that revolver, Captain Ziegler?"

"Try." Ziegler shrugged. "Manufacturer's number has been filed off. It's an old gun, too. And no prints. Bad for the D.A."

Ellery clucked irritably and stared down at the quiet man by the corpse. Djuna held his breath a little behind him. Suddenly he said: "Duval, isn't there some way of illuminating this room?"

Monsieur Duval started, his pallor deeper than before in the sword-thrusts of light crossing his face. "There is not an electrical wire or fixture in the entire structure. Excepting for the assembly-room, Mr. Queen."

"How about the arrows pointing the way? They're visible."

"A chemical. I am desolated by this ——"

"Naturally; murder's rarely an occasion for hilarity. But this Stygian pit of yours complicates matters. What do you think, Captain?"

"Looks open and shut to *me*. I don't know how he got away, but this Clarke's the killer. We'll find him and sweat it out of him. He shot the doctor from the spot where

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you found the gun layin' —" Ellery frowned — "and then dragged the body to the door of the preceding room and set it up against the door to give him time for his getaway. Blood-trail tells that. The shots were lost in the noise of this damn' place. He must have figured on that."

"Hmm. That's all very well, except for the manner of Clarke's disappearance . . . if it *was* Clarke." Ellery sucked his fingernail, revolving Ziegler's analysis in his mind. There was one thing wrong . . . "Ah, the coroner's finished. Well, Doctor?"

The small quiet man rose from his knees in the light of the lantern. The six against the wall were incredibly still. "Simple enough. Four bullets within an area of inches. Two of them pierced the heart from behind. Good shooting, Mr. Queen."

Ellery blinked. "Good shooting," he repeated. "Yes, very good shooting indeed, Doctor. How long has he been dead?"

"About an hour. He died instantly, by the way."

"That means," muttered Ellery, "that he must have been shot only a few minutes before I found him. His body was still warm." He looked intently at the empurpled dead face. "But you're wrong, Captain Ziegler, about the position of the killer when he fired the shots. He couldn't have stood so far away from Dr. Hardy. In fact, as I see it, he must have been very close to Hardy. There are powder-marks on the dead man's body, of course, Doctor?"

The county coroner looked puzzled. "Powder-marks? Why, no. Of course not. Not a trace of burnt powder. Captain Ziegler's right."

Ellery said in a strangled voice: "No powder-marks? Why, that's impossible! You're positive? There *must* be powder-marks!"

The coroner and Captain Ziegler exchanged glances. "As something of an expert in these matters, Mr. Queen," said the little man icily, "let me assure you that the victim was shot from a distance of at least twelve feet, probably a foot or two more."

The most remarkable expression came over Ellery's face. He opened his mouth to speak, closed it again, blinked once more, and then took out a cigaret and lit it, puffing slowly. "Twelve feet. No powder-marks," he said in a hushed voice. "Well, well. Now, that's downright amazing. That's a lesson in the illogicalities that would interest Professor Dewey himself. I can't believe it. Simply can't."

The coroner eyed him hostilely. "I'm a reasonably intelligent man, Mr. Queen, but you're talking nonsense as far as I'm concerned."

"What's on your mind?" demanded Captain Ziegler.

"Don't *you* know, either?" Then Ellery said abstractedly: "Let's have a peep at the contents of his clothes, please."

The detective jerked his head toward a pile of miscellaneous articles on the floor. Ellery went down on his haunches, indifferent to his staring audience. When he rose he was mumbling to himself almost with petulance. He had not found what he was seek-

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ing, what logic told him should be there. There were not even smoking materials of any kind. And there was no watch; he even examined the dead man's wrists for marks.

He strode about the room, nose lowered, searching the floor with an absorption that was oblivious to the puzzled looks directed at him. The flashlight in his hand was a darting, probing finger.

"But we've searched this room!" exploded Captain Ziegler. "What in the name of heaven are you looking for, Mr. Queen?"

"Something," murmured Ellery grimly, "that must be here if there's any sanity in this world. Let's see what your men have scraped together from the floors of all the rooms, Captain."

"But they didn't find anything!"

"I'm not talking of things that would strike a detective as possibly 'important.' I'm referring to trivia: a scrap of paper, a sliver of wood — anything."

A broad-shouldered man said respectfully: "I looked myself, Mr. Queen. There wasn't even dust."

"*S'il vous plait*," said Monsieur Duval nervously. "Of that we have taken care with ingenuity. There is here both a ventilation system and another, a vacuum system, which sucks in the dust and keeps *la maison des ténèbres* of a cleanliness immaculate."

"Vacuum!" exclaimed Ellery. "A sucking process . . . It's possible! Is this vacuum machine in operation all the time, Duval?"

"But no, my friend. Only in the night, when *The House of Darkness* is empty and — how do you say? — inoperative. But that is why your *gendarmes* found nothing, not even the dust."

"Foiled," muttered Ellery whimsically, but his eyes were grave. "The machine doesn't operate in the daytime. So that's out. Captain, forgive my persistence. But *everything's* been searched? The assembly-room downstairs, too? Someone here might have ——"

Captain Ziegler's face was stormy. "I can't figure you out. How many times do I have to say it? The man on duty in the cellar says no one even popped in there and went back during the period of the murder. So what?"

"Well, then," sighed Ellery, "I'll have to ask you to search each of these people, Captain." There was a note of desperation in his voice.

Mr. Ellery Queen's frown was a thing of beauty when he put down the last personal possession of the six prisoners. He had picked them apart to the accompaniment of a chorus of protests, chiefly from the artist Adams and Miss Reis. But he had not found what should have been there. He rose from his squatting position on the floor and silently indicated that the articles might be returned to their owners.

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"*Parbleu!*" cried Monsieur Duval suddenly. "I do not know what is it for which you seek, my friend; but it is possible that it has been secretly placed upon the person of one of us, *n'est-ce pas?* If it is of a nature damaging, that would be ——"

Ellery looked up with a faint interest. "Good for you, Duval. I hadn't thought of that."

"We shall see," said Monsieur Duval excitedly, beginning to turn out his pockets, "if the brain of Dieudonné Duval is not capable . . . *Voici!* Will you please to examine, Mr. Queen?"

Ellery looked over the collection of odds and ends briefly. "No dice. That was generous, Duval." He began to poke about in his own pockets.

Djuna announced proudly: "I've got everything *I* ought to."

"Well, Mr. Queen?" asked Ziegler impatiently.

Ellery waved an absent hand. "I'm through, Captain . . . Wait!" He stood still, eyes lost in space. "Wait here. It's still possible —" Without explanation he plunged through the doorway marked with the green arrow, found himself in a narrow passageway as black as the rooms leading off from it, and flashed his light about. Then he ran back to the extreme end of the corridor and began a worm's progress, scrutinizing each inch of the corridor-floor as if his life depended upon his thoroughness. Twice he turned corners, and at last he found himself at a dead end confronted by a door marked "*Exit: Assembly Room.*" He pushed the door in and blinked at the lights of the cellar. A policeman touched his cap to him; the attendant skeleton looked scared.

"Not even a bit of wax, or a few crumbs of broken glass, or a burnt matchstick," he muttered. A thought struck him. "Here, officer, open this door in the grating for me, will you?"

The policeman unlocked a small door in the grating and Ellery stepped through to the larger division of the room. He made at once for the rack on the wall, in the compartments of which were the things the prisoners — and he himself — had checked before plunging into the main body of the *House*. He inspected these minutely. When he came to the artist's box he opened it, glanced at the paints and brushes and palette and three small daubs — a landscape and two seascapes — which were quite orthodox and uninspired, closed it. . . .

He paced up and down under the dusty light of the bulbs, frowning fiercely. Minutes passed. *The House of Darkness* was silent, as if in tribute to its unexpected dead. The policeman gaped.

Suddenly he halted and the frown faded, to be replaced by a grim smile. "Yes, yes, that's it," he muttered. "Why didn't I think of it before? Officer! Take all this truck back to the scene of the crime. I'll carry this small table back with me. We've all the paraphernalia, and in the darkness we should be able to conduct a very thrilling *seance!*"

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When he knocked on the door of the octagonal room from the corridor, it was opened by Captain Ziegler himself.

"You back?" growled the detective. "We're just ready to scram. Stiff's crated ——"

"Not for a few moments yet, I trust," said Ellery smoothly, motioning the burdened policeman to precede him. "I've a little speech to make."

"Speech!"

"A speech fraught with subtleties and clevernesses, my dear Captain. Duval, this will delight your Gallic soul. Ladies and gentlemen, you will please remain in your places. That's right, officer; on the table. Now, gentlemen, if you will kindly focus the rays of your flashes upon me and the table, we can begin our demonstration."

The room was very still. The body of Dr. Anselm Hardy lay in a wickerwork basket, brown-covered, invisible. Ellery presided like a *Swami* in the center of the room, the nucleus of thin beams. Only the glitter of eyes was reflected back to him from the walls.

He rested one hand on the small table, cluttered with the belongings of the prisoners. "*Alors, mesdames et messieurs*, we begin. We begin with the extraordinary fact that the scene of this crime is significant for one thing above all: its darkness. Now, that's a little out of the usual run. It suggests certain disturbing nuances before you think it out. This is literally a house of darkness. A man has been murdered in one of its unholy chambers. In the house itself — excluding, of course, the victim, myself, and my panting young charge — we find six persons presumably devoting themselves to enjoyment of Monsieur Duval's satanic creation. No one during the period of the crime was observed to emerge from the only possible exit, if we are to take the word of the structure's own architect, Monsieur Duval. It is inevitable, then, that one of these six is the killer of Dr. Hardy."

There was a mass rustle, a rising sigh, which died almost as soon as it was born.

"Now observe," continued Ellery dreamily, "what pranks fate plays. In this tragedy of darkness, the cast includes at least three characters associated with darkness. I refer to Mr. Reis, who is blind; and to Mr. Juju Jones and his escort, who are Negroes. Isn't that significant? Doesn't it mean something to you?"

Juju Jones groaned: "Ah di'n't do it, Mistuh Queen."

Ellery said: "Moreover, Mr. Reis has a possible motive; the victim treated his eyes, and in the course of this treatment Mr. Reis became blind. And Mrs. Clarke offered us a jealous husband. Two motives, then. So far, so good. . . . But all this tells us nothing vital about the crime itself."

"Well," demanded Ziegler harshly, "what does?"

"The darkness, Captain, the darkness," replied Ellery in gentle accents. "I seem to have been the only one who was disturbed by that darkness." A brisk note sprang into his voice. "This room is totally black. There is no electricity, no lamp, no lantern, no

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gas, no candle, no window in its equipment. Its three doors open onto places as dark as itself. The green and red lights above the doors are nonluminous, radiate no light visible to the human eye beyond the arrows themselves. . . . *And yet, in this blackest of black rooms, someone was able at a distance of at least twelve feet to place four bullets within an area of inches in this invisible victim's back!*"

Someone gasped. Captain Ziegler muttered: "By damn . . ."

"How?" asked Ellery softly. "Those shots were accurate. They couldn't have been accidents — not four of them. I had assumed in the beginning that there must be powder-burns on the dead man's coat, that the killer must have stood directly behind Dr. Hardy, touching him, even holding him steady, jamming the muzzle of the revolver into his back and firing. But the coroner said no! It seemed impossible. In a totally dark room? At twelve feet? The killer couldn't have hit Hardy by ear alone, listening to movements, footsteps; the shots were too accurately placed for that theory. Besides, the target must have been moving, however slowly. I couldn't understand it. The only possible answer was that *the murderer had light to see by.* And yet there was no light."

Matthew Reis said musically: "Very clever, sir."

"Elementary, rather, Mr. Reis. There was no light in the room itself. . . . Now, thanks to Monsieur Duval's vacuum-suction system, there is never any débris in this place. That meant that if we found something it might belong to one of the suspects. But the police had searched minutely and found literally nothing. I myself fine-combed this room looking for a flashlight, a burnt match, a wax taper — anything that might have indicated the light by which the murderer shot Dr. Hardy. Since I had analyzed the facts, I knew what to look for, as would anyone who had analyzed them. When I found nothing in the nature of a light-giver, I was flabbergasted.

"I examined the contents of the pockets of our six suspects; still no clue to the source of the light. A single matchstick would have helped, although I realized that that would hardly have been the means employed; for this had been a trap laid in advance. The murderer had apparently enticed his victim to *The House of Darkness.* He had planned the murder to take place here. Undoubtedly he had visited it before, seen its complete lack of lighting facilities. He therefore would have planned in advance to provide means of illumination. He scarcely would have relied on matches; certainly he would have preferred a flashlight. But there was nothing, nothing, not even the improbable burnt match. If it was not on his person, had he thrown it away? But where? It has not been found. Nowhere in the rooms or corridor."

Ellery paused over a cigaret. "And so I came to the conclusion," he drawled, puffing smoke, "that *the light must have emanated from the victim himself.*"

"But no!" gasped Monsieur Duval. "No man would so foolish be ——"

"Not consciously, of course. But he might have provided light unconsciously. I

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looked over the very dead Dr. Hardy. He wore dark clothing. There was no watch which might possess radial hands. He had no smoking implements on his person; a non-smoker, obviously. No matches or lighter, then. And no flashlight. Nothing of a luminous nature which might explain how the killer saw where to aim. That is," he murmured, "nothing but one last possibility."

"What ——"

"Will you gentlemen please put the lantern and your flashes out?"

For a moment there was uncomprehending inaction; and then lights began to snap off, until finally the room was steeped in the same thick palpable darkness that had existed when Ellery had stumbled into it. "Keep your places, please," said Ellery curtly. "Don't move, anyone."

There was no sound at first except the quick breaths of rigid people. The glow of Ellery's cigaret died, snuffed out. Then there was a slight rustling and a sharp click. And before their astonished eyes a roughly rectangular blob of light no larger than a domino, misty and nacreous, began to move across the room. It sailed in a straight line, like a homing pigeon, and then another blob detached itself from the first and touched something, and lo! there was still a third blob of light.

"Demonstrating," came Ellery's cool voice, "the miracle of how Nature provides for her most wayward children. Phosphorus, of course. Phosphorus in the form of paint. If, for example, the murderer had contrived to daub the back of the victim's coat before the victim entered *The House of Darkness* — perhaps in the press of a crowd — he insured himself sufficient light for his crime. In a totally black place he had only to search for the phosphorescent patch. Then four shots in the thick of it from a distance of twelve feet — no great shakes to a good marksman — the bullet-holes obliterate most of the light-patch, any bit that remains is doused in gushing blood . . . and the murderer's safe all round. . . . Yes, yes, very clever. *No, you don't!*"

The third blob of light jerked into violent motion, lunging forward, disappearing, appearing, making progress toward the green-arrowed door. . . . There was a crash, and a clatter, the sounds of a furious struggle. Lights flicked madly on, whipping across one another. They illuminated an area on the floor in which Ellery lay entwined with a man who fought in desperate silence. Beside them lay the paint-box, open.

Captain Ziegler jumped in and rapped the man over the head with his billy. He dropped back with a groan, unconscious. It was the artist, Adams.

"But how did you know it was Adams?" demanded Ziegler a few moments later, when some semblance of order had been restored. Adams lay on the floor, manacled; the others crowded around, relief on some faces, fright on others.

"By a curious fact," panted Ellery, brushing himself off. "Djuna, stop pawing me! I'm quite all right. . . . You yourself told me, Captain, that when you found Adams

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blundering around in the dark he was complaining that he wanted to get out but couldn't find the exit. (Naturally he would!) He said that he knew he should follow the green lights, but when he did he only got deeper into the labyrinth of rooms. But how could that have been if he *had* followed the green lights? Any one of them would have taken him directly into the straight, monkeyshineless corridor leading to the exit. Then he *hadn't* followed the green lights. Since he could have no reason to lie about it, it must simply have meant, I reasoned, that he *thought* he had been following the green lights but had been following the red lights instead, since he continued to blunder from room to room."

"But how ——"

"Very simple. Color-blindness. He's afflicted with the common type of color-blindness in which the subject confuses red and green. Unquestionably he didn't know that he had such an affliction; many color-blind persons don't. He had expected to make his escape quickly, before the body was found, depending on the green light he had previously heard the barker mention to insure his getaway.

"But that's not the important point. The important point is that *he claimed to be an artist.* Now, it's almost impossible for an artist to work in color and still be color-blind. The fact that he had found himself trapped, misled by the red lights, proved that he was not conscious of his red-green affliction. But I examined his landscape and seascapes in the paint-box and found them quite orthodox. I knew, then, that they weren't his; that he was masquerading, that he was not an artist at all. But if he was masquerading, he became a vital suspect!

"Then, when I put that together with the final deduction about the source of light, I had the whole answer in a flash. Phosphorus paint — paint-box. And he had directly preceded Hardy into the *House.* . . . The rest was pure theatre. He felt that he wan't running any risk with the phosphorus, for whoever would examine the paint-box would naturally open it *in the light*, where the luminous quality of the chemical would be invisible. And there you are."

"Then my husband —" began Mrs. Clarke in a strangled voice, staring down at the unconscious murderer.

"But the motive, my friend," protested Monsieur Duval, wiping his forehead. "The motive! A man does not kill for nothing. Why ——"

"The motive?" Ellery shrugged. "You already know the motive, Duval. In fact, you know —" He stopped and knelt suddenly by the bearded man. His hand flashed out and came away — with the beard. Mrs. Clarke screamed and staggered back. "He even changed his voice. This, I'm afraid, is your vanishing Mr. Clarke!"

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The Adventure of

THE TEAKWOOD CASE

THE WOODY, leathery, homely living room of the Queens' apartment on West Eighty-seventh Street in New York City had seen queerer visitors than Mr. Seaman Carter, but surely none quite so ill at ease.

"Really, Mr. Carter," said Ellery Queen with amusement, stretching his long legs nearer the fireplace, "you've been wretchedly misinformed. I'm not a detective at all, you know. My father is the sleuth of this family! Officially I've no more right to investigate a crime than you have."

"But that's exactly the point, Mr. Queen!" wheezed Carter with a vast rolling of his porphyry eyes. "We don't *want* the police. We want *unofficial* advice. We want *you*, Mr. Queen, to clear up these devilish robberies *sub rosa* — ahem! — so to speak; or I shouldn't have come. The Gothic Arms can't afford the notoriety, my dear, dear Mr. Queen. We're an exclusive development catering to the best people —"

"Pshaw, Mr. Carter," said Ellery between lazy puffs of the inevitable cigaret, "go to the police. You've had five robberies in as many months. All of jewels, all filched from different tenants on different floors. And now this latest theft two days ago — a diamond necklace from the bedroom wall-safe of a Mrs. Mallorie, an invalid and one of your oldest tenants. . . ."

"Mrs. Mallorie!" Carter shuddered with the sinuous ripplings of an octopus in motion. "She's an old woman. She went into hysterics — a terrible person, Mr. Queen. Insists on calling in the police, informing the insurance company. . . . We're at our wits' end."

"It seems to me," said Ellery, fixing his sharp eyes on the man's lumpy cheeks, which were quivering, "that you'll be in the devil of a sweet mess, Mr. Carter, if you don't get official help at once. You're making an extraordinary fuss about very small potatoes."

The telephone-bell rang and Djuna, the Queens' boy-of-all-work, slipped into the bedroom to answer it. He popped his small gypsy head out of the doorway almost at once. "For you, Mr. Ellery. Dad Queen is on the wire and he's hopping."

"Excuse me," said Ellery, abruptly, and went into the bedroom.

When he came out all amusement had fled from his lean features. He had divested his tall body of the battered old dressing-gown and was fully attired for the street.

"You'll be interested to learn, no doubt," he said in a flat voice, "that once more fact has outdone fiction, Mr. Carter. I've been treated to the spectacle of an amazing coincidence. On which floor did you say Mrs. Mallorie's apartment lies?"

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Mr. Seaman Carter shook like the damp flanks of a grumbling volcano; his little eyes became glassy. "My God!" he screeched, dragging himself to his feet. "What happened now? Mrs. Mallorie occupies Apartment F on the sixteenth floor!"

"I'm delighted to hear it. Well, Mr. Carter, your laudable effort to smother legitimate news has failed, and you have enlisted my poor services. Except that we are *en route* to the scene of a crime more serious than theft. My father, Inspector Queen, informs me that a man in Apartment H on the sixteenth floor of the Gothic Arms has been found foully done in. In a word, he's been murdered."

An express elevator took Ellery and the Superintendent to the sixteenth floor. They emerged on the west corridor of the building. A central corridor bisected the hall in which they found themselves, and at its end could be seen the bronze doors of the elevator on the east corridor. Carter, his globular carcass trembling like gelatinous ooze, led the way toward the right. They came to a door before which stood a whistling detective. The door, marked with a gilded *H*, was closed. Carter opened it and they went in.

They were in a small foyer, through the open door of which they could see into a large room filled with men. Ellery brushed by a uniformed officer, nodded to his father — a small bird-like creature with gray plumage and bright little eyes — and stared down at a still figure in an armchair beside a small table in the center of the room.

"Strangled?"

"Yes," said Inspector Queen. "And who's this with you, Ellery?"

"Mr. Seaman Carter, Superintendent of the building." Ellery idly explained the purpose of Carter's visit; his eyes were roving.

"Carter, who's this dead man?" demanded the Inspector. "No one here seems to know."

Carter shifted from one elephantine foot to the other. "Who?" he babbled. "Who? Why, isn't it Mr. Lubbock?"

A foppish young man in morning coat dotted with a *boutonnière* coughed hesitantly. They turned to stare at him. "It's not Lubbock, Mr. Carter," he lisped. "Though it does look like him from the back." His simpering lips were pale with fear.

"Who's *that*?" asked Ellery.

"Fullis, my assistant," muttered the Superintendent. "Heavens, Fullis, you're right at that." He pushed around the armchair for a better view of the body.

A trim tall man with a ruddy complexion came briskly into the room. He was carrying a black bag. Carter addressed him as Dr. Eustace. The physician set his bag down by the chair and proceeded to examine the dead man. Dr. Eustace was the house physician.

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Ellery drew the Inspector aside. "Anything?" he asked in low tones.

The Inspector gasped over a generous noseful of snuff. "Nothing. A complete mystery. Body was found by accident about an hour or so ago. A woman from Apartment C across the central corridor came in here to see John Lubbock, who lives alone in this two-room suite. At least, that's what *she* says." He moved his head slightly in the direction of a platinum-haired young woman, whose tears had played havoc with the careful lacquer on her face; she was sitting forlornly across the room guarded by a policeman. "She's Billy Harms, the ingénue of that punk comedy at the Roman Theater. Managed to squeeze out of her the information that she's been Lubbock's playmate for a couple of months; her maid tells me — thank God for maids! — that she and Lubbock had a lovers' battle a few weeks ago. Seems he won't pay her rent any more, and I guess the market on sugar-daddies has gone 'way down."

"Lovely people," said Ellery. "And?"

"She walked herself plump in here — seems it was sort of dim; only a small light in the lamp on the table — thought this chap was asleep, shook him, saw he wasn't Lubbock and that he was dead. . . . The old story. She screamed and a lot of people ran in — neighbors. Over there." Ellery saw five people huddled near Billy Harms's chair. "They all live on this floor. That elderly couple — Mr. and Mrs. Orkins, Apartment A across the hall. The sour-faced mutt next to the Orkinses is a jeweler, Benjamin Schley — Apartment B. Those other two people are Mr. and Mrs. Forrester — he's got some kind of soft job with the city; they're in Apartment D, next to Billy Harms."

"Get anything out of them?"

"Not a lead." The Inspector bit off the end of a gray hair from his mustache. "Lubbock left here this morning and hasn't been seen since. He's a man-about-town, it seems, and he's been pretty gay with the ladies. Understand from one of the housemaids that he's been playing around with Mrs. Forrester, too — kind of pretty, isn't she? But there doesn't seem to be any connection with the others." He shrugged. "Had a few feelers out already — Lubbock has no business and nobody seems to know his source of income. Anyway, it's not Lubbock we're interested in right now, although we're trying to locate him. Got Hagstrom on the job. But none of the people employed here can say who this feller is that was choked. Never saw him before, they say; and there's nothing in his effects to show who he is."

Dr. Eustace signaled the Inspector; he had risen from his inspection of the corpse. The Queens moved back toward the chair. "What's the dope, Doctor?" asked the Inspector.

"Strangled to death from behind," replied the physician, "a little more than an hour ago. That's really all I can tell, sir."

"That's a help, that is."

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Ellery strolled over to the little table by the dead man's chair. The contents of the man's clothes had been dumped there. A worn cheap wallet containing fifty-seven dollars; a few coins; a small automatic; a single Yale key; a New York evening newspaper; a crumpled program of the Roman Theater; the torn half of a Roman Theater ticket, dated that very day; two soiled handkerchiefs; a stiff new packet of matches, its flap bearing the imprint of the Gothic Arms; a glistening green cigaret package, half of the tin-foil and blue seal at the top torn away. The package contained four cigarets although it was apparently a fresh one and retained its full shape.

A meagre enough grist on the surface.

Ellery picked up the small key. "Have you identified this?" he asked the Inspector.

"Yes. It's the key to this apartment."

"A duplicate?"

Mr. Seaman Carter took it from Ellery's hand with slippery fingers, fumbled with it, consulted with lisping Fullis, and returned it to Ellery. "That's the original, Mr. Queen," he quavered. "Not the duplicate."

Ellery flung the key on the table; his sharp eyes began to prowl. He spied a small metal waste-basket beneath the table, and dug it out. It was clean and empty except for a crumpled ball of tin-foil and blue paper, and a crushed cellophane wrapper. Ellery at once matched his finds to the package of cigarets; he smoothed out the silver-and-blue scrap and discovered that it exactly fitted the hole torn in the top of the package.

The Inspector smiled at his look of concentration. "Don't get excited, sonny boy. He walked in the lobby downstairs from the street about an hour and a half ago, and bought that pack of butts at the desk; got the matches there, too, of course. Then he came upstairs. Elevator man let him off at this floor, and that's the last any one saw of him."

"Except his murderer," said Ellery with a frown. "And yet . . . Did you look into this package, dad?"

"No. Why?"

"If you had, you would have seen that there are only four cigarets here. And that, I believe, is significant."

He said nothing more and commenced a leisurely amble about the room. It was large, rich, and furnished with a dilettante's taste. But Ellery was not interested in John Lubbock's interior decorations at the moment; he was looking for ash-trays. He saw several scattered about, of different shapes and sizes; all of them were perfectly clean. His eyes lowered to the floor, and leveled again as if they had not found what they were seeking. "Does that lead to the bedroom?" he asked, pointing to a door at the southeast corner of the room. The Inspector nodded, and Ellery crossed the room and disappeared through the doorway.

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A group of newcomers — a police-photographer, a fingerprint man, the Assistant Medical Examiner of New York County — invaded the living room as Ellery left; he could hear dull booms from flashlights and the crackling insistence of the Inspector as the old man began to requestion the tenants of the sixteenth floor.

Ellery looked about the bedroom. The bed was a canopied affair, ornate with silk and tassels; there was a lush Chinese rug on the floor; and the furniture and fripperies made his simple eyes ache. He looked for exits. There were three doors — the one he had just opened from the living room; one to his right, which on investigation he found opened out on the west corridor; and one to his left. He tried the knob of this door; it was locked, but there was a key in the keyhole. He unlocked the door and found himself looking into a room devoid of furniture, achitecturally the counterpart of Lubbock's bedroom. Further investigation revealed an empty living room and a bare foyer. This, as he could see, was Apartment G; obviously unoccupied. All doors leading into Apartment G, as he discovered at once, were unlocked.

Ellery sighed, returned to Lubbock's bedroom, and turned the key in the lock, leaving it there. On impulse he paused to take out his handkerchief and wipe the knob clean. Then he proceeded directly to a wardrobe and began to rummage through the pockets of the numerous men's garments hanging on a rack inside — there were coats, suits, hats in profusion. He went through a curious routine; he seemed to be interested in nothing but crumbs. He turned pockets inside out and examined the sediment in the crevices. "No tobacco grains," he murmured to himself. "Interesting — but where the deuce does it get me?"

Then he carefully restored all pockets and garments to their original condition, closed the wardrobe, and went to the west corridor door. He opened it, stepped out, and hurried down the corridor to the front door of Lubbock's suite. He caught sight of the photographer, the fingerprint man, Sergeant Velie, and the tall, lank, saturnine figure of Dr. Prouty, Assistant Medical Examiner, standing near the elevators engaged in amiable conversation.

Nodding to the detective on guard before Apartment H — the man was still whistling — Ellery entered the foyer and repeated his odd examination of pockets in all the garments hanging in the foyer-closet; a fruitless quest, to judge from his expression.

Raised voices from the living room made him close the closet-door with a little snap. He heard his father say: "You'd better pull yourself together, Mr. Lubbock."

Ellery hurried into the living room. The neighbors had left, or had been sent to their apartments under guard. Of the original cast of the drama, only Mr. Seaman Carter and Dr. Eustace remained. But there was a newcomer — a small, slender, sunken-cheeked dandy with sandy hair and blue eyes whose well-scraped jaws wabbled ludicrously as he stared down at the dead man.

"Who's this?" asked Ellery pleasantly.

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The man turned, looked at him without intelligence and twisted his head back toward the corpse.

"Mr. John Lubbock," said the Inspector. "Tenant of this apartment. He's just been found — Hagstrom brought him in. *And* we've identified the lad in the chair."

Ellery studied John Lubbock's face. "Relative of yours, Mr. Lubbock? There's a distinct resemblance."

"Yes," said Lubbock hoarsely, coming to life. "He's — he was my brother. I — he got into town from Guatemala this morning; he was an engineer and we hadn't seen each other for three years. Looked me up at one of my clubs. I had an appointment, gave him the key to my apartment, and he said he'd take in a matinee and meet me here late this afternoon. And here I find him —" He squared his shoulders, sucked in his breath, and sanity crept back into his marbly blue eyes. "It's beyond my comprehension."

"Mr. Lubbock," said the Inspector, "did your brother have any enemies?"

The sandy-haired man gripped the edge of the table. "I don't know," he said helplessly. "Harry never wrote me anything — anything like that."

Ellery said: "Mr. Lubbock, I want you to examine these things on the table. They are the contents of your brother's pockets. Is anything missing that should be here?"

The dilettante looked at the table. He shook his head. "I really wouldn't know," he said.

Ellery touched his arm. "*Are you certain his cigaret-case isn't missing, Mr. Lubbock?*"

Lubbock started, and something like curiosity came into his dull eyes. As for the Inspector, he was petrified with astonishment.

"Cigaret-case? What's this about a cigaret-case, Ellery? We haven't found any such thing!"

"Precisely the point," said Ellery gently. "Well, Mr. Lubbock?"

Lubbock moistened his dry lips. "Now that you mention it — yes," he said with an effort. "Though how in God's name you knew is more than I can see. Why, I forgot it myself! Before Harry left the States for Central America three years ago he showed me two cigaret-cases, exactly alike." He fumbled in the inner breast-pocket of his jacket and brought out a shallow dull-black case, intricately inset with an Oriental design in silver, one tiny sliver of which was missing from its groove.

Ellery opened the case, which contained half a dozen cigarets, with shining eyes; a rabid worshiper of the weed himself, cigaret-cases were one of Ellery's cherished passions.

"A friend of Harry's," continued Lubbock wearily, "sent the two cases to him from Bangkok. Finest teakwood in the world comes from the East Indies, you know. Harry gave one of them to me, and I've had it ever since. But how did you know, Mr. Queen, that —"

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Ellery snapped the lid down and returned the case to Lubbock. He was smiling. "It's our business to know things, although really my knowledge isn't the least bit mysterious."

Lubbock was stowing the case carefully away in his breast-pocket — quite as if it were a treasure — when there came a mutter of voices from the foyer and two white-clad internes marched in. The Inspector nodded; they unrolled their stretcher, hauled the dead man out of the armchair, dumped him unceremoniously upon the canvas, covered him with a blanket, and marched out toting their burden as if it were a side of fresh-killed beef. John Lubbock clutched the edge of the table again, his pale face grew paler, he gulped, retched, and began to slip to the floor.

"Here! You, Eustace! Doc Prouty, out there! Quick!" cried the Inspector as he and Ellery lunged forward and caught the fainting man. Dr. Eustace opened his bag as Dr. Prouty dashed in. Lubbock muttered thickly: "Guess it was — too much — for me — seeing them take — Poor Harry . . . Give me a sedative — something — brace me up."

Dr. Prouty snorted and went right out again. Dr. Eustace produced a bottle and thrust it beneath Lubbock's nostrils. They quivered and Lubbock grinned faintly. "Here," said Ellery, pulling out his own cigaret-case. "Have a smoke. Do your nerves good." But Lubbock shook his head and pushed the pellet away. "I'll — be all right," he gasped, struggling erect. "Sorry."

Ellery said to Superintendent Carter, who stood like a blind rhinoceros near the table, perspiration pouring down his face: "Please send up the maid who cleans this suite, Mr. Carter. At once."

The fat man nodded eagerly and waddled out of the living room as fast as his jelly legs could carry him. Sergeant Velie, strolling in, scowled at Carter with disgust. Ellery glanced at his father, jerked his head toward the foyer, and the old man said: "You stay here and rest up a bit, Mr. Lubbock; we'll be back shortly."

Ellery and the Inspector went out into the foyer, and Ellery very softly closed the door to the living room.

"What the devil's up now?" growled the Inspector.

Ellery smiled and said: "Wait." He put his hand behind his back and began to stroll about.

A trim little colored girl in black regalia hurried up to the apartment door, her face an alarming violet.

"Ah," said Ellery. "Come in. You're the maid who cleans this suite regularly?"

"Yes, suh!"

"You cleaned it this morning as usual?"

"Yes, suh!"

"And were there any ashes in the ashtrays?"

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"No, suh! Nevuh is in Mistuh Lubbock's apa'tment 'ceptin' when he's had comp'ny."

"You're positive of that?"

"Cross mah haht, suh!"

The girl retreated hastily. The Inspector said: "I'll be jiggered."

Ellery had dropped his cloak of insouciance; he drew his father's slender little body closer. "Listen. The maid's testimony was all we needed. Delicate situation, O venerable ancestor. Follow my reasoning.

"The package of cigarets from Harry Lubbock's pocket: a fresh package, observe, confirmed by the fact that he purchased it just before coming up here, by the scrap of perfectly fitting tin-foil and blue paper from the basket, by the cellophane wrapper, and by the uncrushed condition of the package itself. Harry Lubbock came up here to wait for his brother. He sat down in the armchair, his back to the foyer door. He didn't smoke; no ashes anywhere; no cigaret-stubs. Yet despite the fact that this was a new package, we find only *four* cigarets inside. What happened to the other sixteen, since there are twenty to the pack? First possibility is that his murderer took them away, stealing them from the package. Psychologically rotten — can't visualize a murderer taking fresh cigarets from his victim's package. Second possibility: that Lubbock himself opened the package before the arrival of the murderer *in order to fill a cigaret-case*. This would explain the peculiar number of missing cigarets; many cigaret-cases hold sixteen. Yes, I was convinced that the sixteen missing cigarets had been placed by Harry Lubbock, the engineer, in his case. But where was the case? Obviously, since it's gone, the murderer took it away." The Inspector chewed upon that, then nodded. "Good! Now where are we? The cigarets themselves, being brand new, couldn't have been the object of the theft. Then the *case* must have been the object of the theft!"

Inspector Queen pursed his old lips. "Why? There certainly isn't a hidden spring or compartment in that case. It's not thick enough to conceal a Chinaman's breath in the wood itself."

"Don't know, sire, don't know. Haven't the faintest notion *why*. But it's so.

"Now as to John Lubbock. Three psychological indications. . . . But I'll give them to you more graphically. Maid's testimony: no ashes in this apartment, ever, *except* after guests. Sign of a non-smoker? *Oui, papa*. John Lubbock half faints, asks for a sedative, and *refuses* the cigaret I offer him! Sign of a non-smoker? Decidedly; in moments of emotional stress a smoker by habit falls back on the weed — it's the nicotine-addict's nerve soother. And third: there isn't a shred of tobacco in any pocket of any garment in John Lubbock's closets! Ever examine my coat-pocket? There's always tobacco in small grains lurking in the crevices. None in John Lubbock's clothes. Sign of a non-smoker? You answer."

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"All right," said the Inspector softly. "He doesn't indulge. Then why in tunket does he carry a cigaret-case with cigarets in it?"

"Precisely!" cried Ellery. "We've deduced that a cigaret-case was probably stolen from the murdered man. Since John Lubbock isn't a smoker and carries a cigaret-case . . . you see? It's almost tenable — it *is* tenable, by thunder — to say that the case John showed us was his murdered brother's!"

"And that would make him Harry Lubbock's killer," muttered the Inspector. "But there weren't sixteen cigarets in it, El. And the six that *were* there are of a different brand."

"Pie. Naturally our friend the dilettante would ditch the ones his engineer-brother had bought and substitute not only a different number but a different kind. I don't say this is conclusive. But at the moment the wind blows his way quite stiffly. If he's the murderer of his own brother then his story of *two* teakwood cases is a fabrication, composed on the spur of the moment to explain his possession of the teakwood case should there be a search."

The Queens turned swiftly at a knock on the foyer-door. But it was only Dr. Eustace. He came out, leaving the door to the living room ajar. "Sorry to disturb you," he said in gruff apology. "But I've got to see my other patients."

"You'd better be available, Doctor," said the Inspector in a clear grim voice. "We've just decided to take John Lubbock down to Headquarters for a little talk, and we'll need your routine testimony, too."

"Lubbock?" Dr. Eustace stared, then shrugged. "Well, I suppose it's none of my business. I'll be either in my office on the mezzanine floor or I'll leave word at the desk. Ready when you are, Inspector." He nodded and went out.

"Don't scare him," suggested Ellery, as the Inspector made a move toward the living room. "My logic may be wetter than Triton's beard."

When they opened the door to the living room they found Sergeant Velie alone, sitting in the dead man's chair, feet propped on the table. "Where's Lubbock?" asked Ellery swiftly.

Velie yawned; his mouth was a red cavern fringed with enamel. "Went into the bedroom a coupla minutes ago," he rumbled. "Didn't see any harm in it myself." He pointed to the bedroom door, which was closed.

"Oh, you gigantic idiot!" cried Ellery, dashing across the room. He tore open the bedroom door. The bedroom was empty.

The Inspector yelled to his men in the corridor, Sergeant Velie flushed a wine-red and leaped to his feet. . . . The alarm was sounded; men began to comb the halls; the elderly Orkinses poked their white heads out of Apartment A; Billy Harms flew into the central corridor in a lacy chemise; an old witch of a woman in a wheel-chair propelled herself from the front door of Apartment F and sent two cursing detectives

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sprawling with her clumsy manipulation of the conveyance. The scene was like a farcically rapid motion-picture reel.

Ellery wasted no time bewailing Sergeant Velie's unexpected stupidity. From the detective in the west corridor, he discovered that John Lubbock had not emerged from the western door of his bedroom. Ellery ran back to the eastern door, the door which led into the vacant suite. The key which he had left sticking in the door was gone. Gently, without touching the head of the knob, he tried to twist the bolt-bar. It refused to budge; the door was locked.

"The east corridor!" he yelled. "Door's open there!" and led the pack out of Lubbock's apartment, around the corner through the central corridor, up the east corridor and through the unlocked door into the bedroom of empty Apartment G. They tumbled through the doorway — and stopped.

John Lubbock lay sprawled on the floor, without hat or overcoat, fixed in the unmistakable contortions of violent death. Lubbock had been strangled!

At the instant of discovery Ellery had opened his mouth and gasped like a drowning man; the suspect himself murdered! So he sidled toward Sergeant Velie near the bedroom door — the door which communicated with Lubbock's own bedroom — and effaced himself.

His eyes went to this door and quickly narrowed. The key which he had last seen sticking in the lock on the Apartment H side was now in the lock of Apartment G. He fingered it thoughtfully, then slipped out of the room.

He went into the central corridor, found the finger-print expert, and took him back through Lubbock's bedroom to the door between the two apartments. "See what you can get out of this doorknob," he said. The expert went to work. Ellery watched anxiously. Under the man's ministrations several clear fingerprints appeared in white powder on the black stone of the knob. A photographer came in and snapped a picture of the fingerprints.

They repaired to the vacant bedroom of Apartment G. The physicians had completed their task and were discussing something in low tones with Inspector Queen. Ellery pointed to John Lubbock's dead fingers.

When the expert rose from the dusty floor he flourished a white card with ten inked fingerprints. He went to the door, unlocked it, and compared the dead man's prints with those on the knob of Lubbock's bedroom. "Okay," he said. "The stiff's mitts were on this knob."

Ellery sighed.

He knelt beside John Lubbock's body, which looked as if it had turned to stone in the midst of a fierce struggle, and explored the inside breast-pocket of Lubbock's coat.

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Ellery looked thoughtfully at the teakwood case. "I owe an abject apology to the shade of our man-about-town. There *are* two cases, as he said. . . . For this *isn't* the one he showed us a few moments ago!"

The Inspector gaped. Where they had formerly observed in the silverwork of the teakwood case a groove whose sliver of metal was missing, the ornamental design on the case in Ellery's hand was unbroken, perfect.

"The inferences are plain," said Ellery. "Whoever killed John Lubbock did it for the teakwood case in his breast pocket. Everything is clear now. When the murderer strangled John Lubbock in this room, he stole John's case from John's body. The murderer then put into the case he had stolen from *Harry's* body — the first brother — six cigarets of the same brand John's case contained, and then placed *Harry's* case with these six cigarets on John's body, where we found it — in order to make us believe it was still John's case. Clever, but defeated by the fact that John's case had a sliver missing from the design whereas the engineer's had not. The murderer probably didn't notice the difference."

Ellery turned to the others; he held up his hand and they fell silent. "Ladies and gentlemen, the murderer's exceeded himself. He's done. I ask you to be attentive while I go over the ground and point out . . . Mr. Carter, stop shaking. I have every reason to believe that your executive worries are over."

Ellery stood at the feet of the dead man, his lean face expressionless. They watched him with stupid eyes. The detectives at the door retreated in response to Ellery's signal; and the Orkinses, Billy Harms in a négligé, the acid-faced jeweler Schley, Mr. and Mrs. Forrester of Apartment D, and even Mrs. Mallorie in her wheel-chair, crowded into the room.

"Certain lines of reasoning are inevitable," said Ellery, in a dry lecture-voice; he looked at none of them, seeming to be addressing the congested veins in John Lubbock's dead neck. "The only object taken from the first victim's dead body was the teakwood case. This means that the teakwood case was the object of the first murder. Now John Lubbock, the second victim, has been murdered; *his* teakwood case has been taken, and the first one put on his body. Conclusion: The only one who could have switched cases is the one who stole the first victim's case — the murderer. Therefore, both Harry and John Lubbock were strangled by the same hand. Two crimes and one culprit. Fundamental reasoning.

"Why was Harry Lubbock murdered? Simply because the murderer *mistook* him for his brother John, and did not discover the error until after he strangled his victim and examined the first teakwood case. It was the wrong one!

"The murderer's error is understandable. The first victim was choked from behind; superficially the engineer bore a resemblance to his brother John; no doubt the murderer was unaware that there were two Lubbocks. In other words, the engineer's

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case, the case on the floor, had nothing intrinsically to do with the crimes."

He leaned forward. "But mark this. Neither teakwood case *in itself* could have concealed anything — a hidden compartment, for example; then the cases were sought by the murderer not for themselves but for *what they contained.* What do cigaret-cases contain? What did both cases contain? Only cigarets. But why should a man commit murder for cigarets? Obviously, not for the pellets themselves. But if something had been *hidden* in those cigarets — if they had been doctored, if tobacco had been removed from them and something secreted inside, and the ends tamped up with tobacco again . . . then we arrive at a concrete inference."

Ellery straightened and drew a deep breath. "You're Mrs. Mallorie, I take it?" he asked the invalid in the wheel-chair.

"I am!" she replied.

"Only two days ago you were parted from a diamond necklace. How large were the stones?"

"Like small peas," shrilled Mrs. Mallorie. "Worth twenty thousand dollars, the lot of 'em."

"Like small peas. Hmm. A housewifely description, Mrs. Mallorie." Ellery smiled. "We progress. I postulated John Lubbock's cigarets as the hiding-place of something valuable . . . Mrs. Mallorie's rather expensive peas, ladies and gentlemen!"

They buzzed and peep-peeped like fowls in a barnyard. Ellery silenced them: "Yes, we have arrived at the point where it is indicated that your neighbor John Lubbock was not only a dilettante but a jewel thief as well!"

"Mr. Lubbock!" wheezed Seaman Carter in a shocked voice.

"Exactly. Inspector Queen has not been able to discover our man-about-town's source of income. A gigolo? Gigolos do not pay for ladies' apartments; the shoe is rather on the other foot. Ah, but the jewels! Here, then, is a minor mystery solved." Billy Harms stretched her white neck like an ostrich and sniffed. "But note that John Lubbock was murdered for those diamond-concealing cigarets," Ellery continued. "Who could have known that he had those diamonds — moreover, in such a fantastic hiding-place? Surely none but an accomplice. In other words, when we lay hands on the murderer of Harry and John Lubbock we shall have found John Lubbock's partner-in-thievery."

The vague relief they had all exhibited gave way again to fear. No one stirred. Mrs. Mallorie was glaring at John Lubbock's purple face with the utmost malevolence. Ellery smiled again — a very playful and annoying smile. "Now," he said softly, "for the last act of our little drama: the details of the second murder. Jimmy," he said to the Headquarters fingerprint expert, "what did you find in your search?"

"This dead man on the floor had his fingers on the other side of this door — the side where his bedroom is."

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"Thank you. Now it happens, ladies and gentlemen, that just before John Lubbock was murdered I had myself wiped the knob of his bedroom door — the door that leads into this vacant apartment — clean of all fingerprints. This means that Lubbock himself, when he went into his bedroom a few moments ago, put his fingers on the knob. This means that he deliberately opened the door in order to enter this vacant apartment. Was John Lubbock trying to escape? No; he did not don hat or overcoat, for one thing; for another, he could not hope to get far; and even if he did, escape would certainly tar him with the brush of suspicion that he had murdered his brother — and he, of course, was innocent, since he himself has been murdered. Then why did he go into this vacant apartment?

"I was talking wth the Inspector some minutes ago in the foyer of Lubbock's apartment next door. At that time we had reason to believe John guilty of his brother's murder. I had myself shut the door to the living room so that he should not overhear. But when Dr. Eustace came out to visit his other patients in the building, unfortunately he left the door ajar, and it was at that moment that the Inspector, no doubt unaware that the door was open, said distinctly that we were intending to take John Lubbock down to Headquarters 'for a talk' — obviously, to search him and put him on the grid. The harm was done. Sergeant Velie, you were in the living room with Lubbock at that time. Did *you* hear the Inspector make that remark?"

"I did that," muttered the Sergeant, digging his heels into the floor. "I guess he did, too. Only a minute later he said he wanted to go into the bedroom for something."

"Q. E. D.," murmured Ellery. "Lubbock, hearing that he was about to be taken to Police Headquarters, thought rapidly. The stolen diamonds were imbedded in the cigarets in his teakwood case; a thorough search would certainly reveal them. He must rid himself of those cigarets! So now we know why he went into the vacant apartment — not to escape, but to hide the cigarets somewhere until he could regain possession of them later. Naturally, he intended to return.

"But how could the murderer possibly anticipate John Lubbock's instantaneous decision to dispose of the jewels in this vacant apartment, the only immediately available hiding-place? *Only if the murderer, too, had heard the Inspector's remark about taking Lubbock to Headquarters, had realized that Lubbock had also heard, had foreseen what Lubbock would instantly have to do.*"

Ellery smiled wickedly and leaned forward; his long fingers were curved in a predatory hook; his body was tense. "Only five people overheard the Inspector's remark," he snapped. "The Inspector himself, I, Sergeant Velie, the late John Lubbock, and —"

Billy Harms screamed, and old Mrs. Mallorie screeched like a wounded parrot. Someone had plunged toward the door to the east corridor, bellowing and scattering people aside like a maddened bull-elephant, like a Malay running amuck, like an

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ancient Norseman in a berserker rage. . . . Sergeant Velie flung his two hundred and fifty pounds of muscle forward; there was a wild mix-up, the thudding of the Sergeant's chunky fists, clouds of dust. . . . Ellery stood quietly waiting. The Inspector, who had observed Sergeant Velie in action on many former occasions, merely sighed.

"A double-crossing villain as well as a twofold murderer," said Ellery at last when the Sergeant had hammered his adversary into red pulp. "He wanted not only to get rid of John Lubbock, his accomplice, the only human being who knew his guilt as a thief and suspected no doubt his guilt as a murderer, but also to have Mrs. Mallorie's jewels all for himself. Dad, you will find the diamonds either on his person, in his bag, or somewhere about his quarters. The problem," said Ellery, lighting a cigaret and inhaling gratefully under the stony stares of his audience, "was after all a simple one, one which admitted of a strictly logical attack. The facts themselves pointed to that man on the floor as the only possible culprit."

The man writhing in Sergeant Velie's inexorable grip was Dr. Eustace.

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The Adventure of
THE HOLLOW DRAGON

MISS MERRIVEL always said (she said) that the Lord took care of everything, and she affirmed it now with undiminished faith, although she was careful to add in her vigorous contralto that it didn't hurt to help Him out if you could.

"And can you?" asked Mr. Ellery Queen a trifle rebelliously, for he was a notorious heretic, besides having been excavated from his bed without ceremony by Djuna at an obscene hour to lend ear to Miss Merrivel's curiously inexplicable tale. Morpheus still beckoned plaintively, and if this robust and bountiful young woman — she was as healthy-looking and overflowing as a cornucopia — had come only to preach Ellery firmly intended to send her about her business and return to bed.

"Can I?" echoed Miss Merrivel grimly. "*Can* I!" and she took off her hat. Aside from a certain rakish improbability in the hat's design, which looked like a soup-plate, Ellery could see nothing remarkable in it; and he blinked wearily at her. "Look at this!"

She lowered her head, and for a horrified instant Ellery thought she was praying. But then her long brisk fingers came up and parted the reddish hair about her left temple, and he saw a lump beneath the titian strands that was the shape and size of a pigeon's egg and the color of spoiled meat.

"How on earth," he cried, sitting up straight, "did you acquire *that* awful thing?"

Miss Merrivel winced stoically as she patted her hair down and replaced the soup-plate. "I don't know."

"You don't know!"

"It's not so bad now," said Miss Merrivel, crossing her long legs and lighting a cigaret. "The headache's almost gone. Cold applications and pressure . . . you know the technique? I sat up half the night trying to bring the swelling down. You should have seen it at one o'clock this morning! It looked as if someone had put a bicycle pump in my mouth and forgotten to stop pumping."

Ellery scratched his chin. "There's no error, I trust? I'm — er — not a physician, you know. . . ."

"What I need," snapped Miss Merrivel, "is a detective."

"But how in mercy's name ——"

The broad shoulders under the tweeds shrugged. "It's not important, Mr. Queen. I mean my being struck on the head. I'm a brawny wench, as you can see, and I haven't been a trained nurse for six years without gathering a choice assortment of scratches and bruises on my lily-white body. I once had a patient who took the greatest delight

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in kicking my shins." She sighed; a curious gleam came into her eye and her lips compressed a little. "It's something else, you see. Something — funny."

A little silence swept over the Queens' living room and out the window, and Ellery was annoyed to feel his skin crawling. There was something in the depths of Miss Merrivel's voice that suggested a hollow moaning out of a catacomb.

"Funny?" he repeated, reaching for the solace of his cigaret-case.

"Queer. Prickly. You feel it in that house. I'm not-a nervous woman, Mr. Queen, but I declare if I weren't ashamed of myself I'd have quit my job weeks ago." Looking into her calm eyes, Ellery fancied it would go hard with any ordinary ghost who had the temerity to mix with her.

"You're not taking this circuitous method of informing me," he said lightly, "that the house in which you're currently employed is haunted?"

She sniffed. "Haunted! I don't believe in that nonsense, Mr. Queen. You're pulling my leg ——"

"My dear Miss Merrivel, what a charming thought!"

"Besides, who ever heard of a ghost raising bumps on people's heads?"

"An excellent point."

"It's something different," continued Miss Merrivel thoughtfully. "I can't quite describe it. It's just as if something were going to happen, and you waited and waited without knowing where it would strike — or, for that matter, what it would be."

"Apparently the uncertainty has been removed," remarked Ellery dryly, glancing at the soup-plate. "Or do you mean that what you anticipated *wasn't* an assault on yourself?"

Miss Merrivel's calm eyes opened wide. "But, Mr. Queen, no one has assaulted me!"

"I beg your pardon?" Ellery said in a feeble voice.

"I mean to say I *was* assaulted, but I'm sure not intentionally. I just happened to get in the way."

"Of what?" asked Ellery wearily, closing his eyes.

"I don't know. That's the horrible part of it."

Ellery pressed his fingers delicately to his temples, groaning. "Now, now, Miss Merrivel, suppose we organize? I confess to a vast bewilderment. Just why are you here? Has a crime been committed ——"

"Well, you see," cried Miss Merrivel with animation, "Mr. Kagiwa is such an odd little man, so helpless and everything. I do feel sorry for the poor old creature. And when they stole that fiendish little door-stop of his with the tangled-up animal on it . . . Well, it was enough to make anyone suspicious, don't you think?" And she paused to dab her lips with a handkerchief that smelled robustly of disinfectant, smiling triumphantly as she did so, as if her extraordinary speech explained every-

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thing.

Ellery puffed four times on his cigaret before trusting himself to speak. "Did I understand you to say *door-stop?*"

"Certainly. You know, one of those thingamabobs you put on the floor to keep a door open."

"Yes, yes. Stolen, you say?"

"Well, it's gone. And it was there before they hit me on the head last night; I saw it myself, right by the study door, as innocent as you please. Nobody ever paid much attention to it, and ——"

"Incredible," sighed Ellery. "A door-stop. Pretty taste in petit larceny, I must say! Er — animal? I believe you mentioned something about its being 'tangled up'? I'm afraid I don't visualize the beast from your epithet, Miss Merrivel."

"Snaky sort of monster. They're all over the house. Dragons, I suppose you'd call them. Although *I've* never heard of anyone actually seeing them, except in *delirium tremens.*"

"I begin," said Ellery with a reflective nod, "to see. This old gentleman, Kagiwa — I take it he's your present patient?"

"That's right," said Miss Merrivel brightly, nodding at this acute insight. "A chronic renal case. Dr. Sutter of Polyclinic took out one of Mr. Kagiwa's kidneys a couple of months ago, and the poor man is just convalescing. He's quite old, you see, and it's a marvel he's alive to tell the tale. Surgery was risky, but Dr. Sutter had to ——"

"Spare the technical details, Miss Merrivel. I believe I understand. Of course, your uni-kidneyed convalescent is Japanese?"

"Yes. My first."

"You say that," remarked Ellery with a chuckle, "like a young female after her initial venture into maternity. . . . Well, Miss Merrivel, your Japanese and your unstable door-stop and that bump on your charming noddle interest me hugely. If you'll be kind enough to wait, I'll throw some clothes on and go a-questing with you. And on the way you can tell me all about it in something like sane sequence."

In Ellery's ugly but voracious Duesenberg Miss Merrivel watched the city miles devoured, drew a powerful breath, and plunged into her narrative. She had been recommended by Dr. Sutter to nurse Mr. Jito Kagiwa, the aged Japanese gentleman, back to health on his Westchester estate. From the moment she had set foot in the house — which from Miss Merrivel's description was a lovely old non-Nipponese place that rambled over several acres and at the rear projected on stone piles into the waters of the Sound — she had been oppressed by the most annoying and tantalizing feeling of apprehension. She could not put her finger on the source. It might have

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come from the manner in which the outwardly Colonial house was furnished: inside it was like an Oriental museum, she said, full of queer alien furniture and pottery and pictures and things.

"It even smells foreign," she explained with a handsome frown. "That sticky-sweet smell. . . ."

"The effluvium of sheer age?" murmured Ellery; he was occupied between driving at his customary breakneck speed and listening intently. "We seem up to our respective ears in intangibles, Miss Merrivel. Or perhaps it's merely incense?"

Miss Merrivel did not know. She was slightly psychic, she explained; that might account for her sensitivity to impressions. Then again, she continued, it might have been merely the *people*. Although the Lord Himself knew, she said piously, they were nice enough on the surface; all but Letitia Gallant. Mr. Kagiwa was an extremely wealthy importer of Oriental curios; he had lived in the United States for over forty years and was quite Americanized. So much so that he had actually married an American divorcee who had subsequently died, bequeathing her Oriental widower a host of fragrant memories, a big blond footballish son, and a vinegary and hard-bitten spinster sister. Bill, Mr. Kagiwa's stepson, who retained his dead mother's maiden name of Gallant, was very fond of his ancient little Oriental stepfather and for the past several years, according to Miss Merrivel, had practically run the old Japanese's business for him.

As for Letitia Gallant, Bill's aunt, she made life miserable for everyone, openly bewailing the cruel fate which had thrown her on "the tender mercies of the heathen," as she expressed it, and treating her gentle benefactor with a contempt and sharp-tongued scorn which, said Miss Merrivel with a snap of her strong teeth, were "little short of scandalous."

"Heathen," said Ellery thoughtfully, sliding the Duesenberg into the Pelham highway. "Perhaps that's it, Miss Merrivel. Alien atmospheres generally affect us disagreeably. . . . By the way, was this door-stop valuable?" The theft of that commonplace object was nibbling away at his brain-cells.

"Oh, no. Just a few dollars; I once heard Mr. Kagiwa say so." And Miss Merrivel brushed the door-stop aside with a healthy swoop of her arm and sailed into the more dramatic portion of her story, glowing with its reflected vitality and investing it with an aura of suspense and horror.

On the previous night she had tucked her aged charge into his bed upstairs at the rear of the house, waited until he fell asleep, and then — her duties for the day over — had gone downstairs to the library, which adjoined the old gentleman's study, for a quiet hour of reading. She recalled how hushed the house had been and how loudly the little Japanese clock had ticked away on the mantel over the fireplace. She had been busy with her patient since after dinner and had no idea where the other

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members of the household were; she supposed they were sleeping, for it was past eleven o'clock. . . . Miss Merrivel's calm eyes were no longer calm; they reflected something unpleasant and yet exciting.

"It was so cozy in there," she said in a low troubled voice. "And so still. I had the lamp over my left shoulder and was reading *White Woman* — all about a beautiful young nurse who went on a case and fell in love with the secretary of . . . well, I was reading it," she went on quickly, with a faint flush, "and the house began to get creepy. Simply — creepy. It shouldn't have, from the book. It's an awfully nice book, Mr. Queen. And the clock went ticking away, and I could hear the water splashing against the piles down at the rear of the house, and suddenly I began to shiver. I don't know why. I felt cold all over. I looked around, but there was nothing; the door to the study was open but it was pitch-dark in there. I — I think I got to feeling a little silly. Me hearing things!"

"Just what do you think you heard?" asked Ellery patiently.

"I really don't know. I can't describe it. A slithery sound, like a — a —" She hesitated, and then burst out: "Oh, I know you'll laugh, Mr. Queen, but it was like a *snake!*"

Ellery did not laugh. Dragons danced on the macadam road. Then he sighed and said: "Or like a dragon, if you can imagine what a dragon would sound like; eh, Miss Merrivel? By the way, have you ever heard sounds like that over the radio? An aspirin dropped into a glass of water becomes a beautiful girl diving into the sea. Powerful thing, imagination. . . . And where did this remarkable sound come from?"

"From Mr. Kagiwa's study. From the dark." Miss Merrivel's pink skin was paler now, and her eyes were luminous with half-glimpsed terrors, impervious to such sane analogies. "I was annoyed with myself for making up things in my head and I got out of the chair to investigate. And — and the door of the study suddenly swung shut!"

"Oh," said Ellery in a vastly different tone. "And despite everything you opened the door and investigated?"

"It was silly of me," breathed Miss Merrivel. "Foolhardy, really. There was danger there. But I've always been a fool and I did open the door, and the moment I opened it and gawped like an idiot into the darkness something hit me on the head. I really saw stars, Mr. Queen." She laughed, but it was a mirthless, desperate sort of laugh; and her eyes looked sidewise at him, as if for comfort.

"Nevertheless," murmured Ellery, "that was very brave, Miss Merrivel. And then?" They had swung into the Post Road and were heading north.

"I was unconscious for about an hour. When I came to I was still lying on the threshold, half in the library, half in the study. The study was still dark. Nothing had changed. . . . I put the light on in the study and looked around. It seemed the same, you know. All except the door-stop; that was gone, and I knew then why the door had

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swung shut so suddenly. Funny, isn't it? . . . I spent most of the rest of the night bringing the swelling down."

"Then you haven't told anyone about last night?"

"Well, no." She screwed up her features and peered through the windshield with a puckered concentration. "I didn't know that I should. If there's anyone in that house who's — who's homicidally inclined, let him think I don't know what it's all about. Matter of fact, I don't." Ellery said nothing. "They all looked the same to me this morning," continued Miss Merrivel after a pause. "It's my morning off, you see, and I was able to come to town without exciting comment. Not that anyone would care! It's all very silly, isn't it, Mr. Queen?"

"Precisely why it interests me. We turn here, I believe?"

Two things struck Mr. Ellery Queen as a maid with frightened eyes opened the front door for them and ushered them into a lofty reception hall. One was that this house was not like other houses in his experience, and the other that there was something queerly wrong in it. The first impression arose from the boldly Oriental character of the furnishings — a lush rug on the floor brilliant and soft with the vivid technique of the East, a mother-of-pearl-inlaid teak table, an overhead lamp that was a miniature pagoda, a profusion of exotic chrysanthemums, silk hangings embroidered with colored dragons. . . . The second troubled him. Perhaps it arose from the scared pallor of the maid, or the penetrating aroma. A sticky-sweet odor, even as Miss Merrivel had described it, hung heavily in the air, cloying his senses and instantly making him wish for the open air.

"Miss Merrivel!" cried a man's voice, and Ellery turned quickly to find a tall young man with thin cheeks and intelligent eyes advancing upon them from a doorway which led, from what he could see beyond it, to the library Miss Merrivel had mentioned. He turned back to the young woman and was astonished to see that her cheeks were a flaming crimson.

"Good morning, Mr. Cooper," she said with a catch of her breath. "I want you to meet Mr. Ellery Queen, a friend of mine. I happened to run into him —" They had cooked up a story between them to account for Ellery's visit, but it was destined never to be served.

"Yes, yes," said the young man excitedly, scarcely glancing at Ellery. He pounced upon Miss Merrivel, seizing her hands; and her cheeks burned even more brightly. "Merry, where on earth is old Jito?"

"Mr. Kagiwa? Why, isn't he upstairs in his ——"

"No, he isn't. He's gone!"

"Gone?" gasped the nurse, sinking into a chair. "Why, I put him to bed myself last night! When I looked into his room this morning, before I left the house, he was still

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sleeping. . . ."

"No, he wasn't. You only thought he was. He'd rigged up a crude dummy of sorts — I suppose it was he — and covered it with the bedclothes." Cooper paced up and down, worrying his fingernails. "I simply don't understand it."

"I beg your pardon," said Ellery mildly. "I have some experience in these matters." The tall young man stopped short, flinging him a startled glance. "I understand that your Mr. Kagiwa is an old man. He may have crossed the line. It's conceivable that he's playing a senile prank on all of you."

"Lord, no! He's keen as a whippet. And the Japanese don't indulge in childish tomfoolery. There's something up; no question about it, Mr. Queen . . . Queen!" Cooper glared at Ellery with sudden suspicion. "By George, I've heard that name before ——"

"Mr. Queen," said Miss Merrivel in a damp voice, "is a detective."

"Of course! I remember now. You mean you —" The young man became very still as he looked at Miss Merrivel. Under his steady inspection she grew red again. "Merry, you know something!"

"The merest tittle," murmured Ellery. "She's told me what she knows, and it's just skimpy enough to whet my curiosity. Were you aware, Mr. Cooper, that Mr. Kagiwa's door-stop is missing?"

"Door-stop. . . . Oh, you mean that monstrosity he keeps in his study. It can't be. I saw it myself only last night ——"

"Oh, it is!" wailed Miss Merrivel. "And — and somebody hit me over the head, Mr. C-Cooper, and t-took it. . . ."

The young man paled. "Why, Merry. I mean — that's perfectly barbarous! Are you hurt?"

"Oh, Mr. Cooper . . ."

"Now, now," said Ellery sternly, "let's not get maudlin. By the way, Mr. Cooper, just what factor do you represent in this bizarre equation? Miss Merrivel neglected to mention your name in her statement of the problem."

Miss Merrivel blushed again, positively glowing, and this time Ellery looked at her very sharply indeed. It occurred to him suddenly that Miss Merrivel had been reading a romance in which the beautiful young nurse fell in love with the secretary of her patient.

"I'm old Jito's secretary," said Cooper abstractedly. "Look here, old man. What has that confounded door-stop to do with Kagiwa's disappearance?"

"That," said Ellery, "is what I propose to find out." There was a little silence, and Miss Merrivel sent a liquidly pleading glance at Ellery, as if to beg him to keep her secret. "Is anything else missing?"

"I don't know what business it is of yours, young man," snapped a female from the

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library doorway, "but, praise be! the heathen is gone, bag and baggage, and good riddance, I say. I always said that slinky yellow devil would come to no good."

"Miss Letitia Gallant, I believe?" sighed Ellery, and from the stiffening backbones and freezing faces of Miss Merrivel and Mr. Cooper it was evident that truth had prevailed.

"Stow it, Aunt Letty, for heaven's sake," said a man worriedly from behind her, and she swept her long skirts aside with a sniff that had something Airedale-ish about it. Bill Gallant was a giant with a red face and bloodshot eyes in sacs. He looked as if he had not slept and his clothes were rumpled and droopy. His aunt in the flesh was all that Miss Merrivel had characterized her, and more. Thin to the point of emaciation, she seemed composed of whalebone, tough rubber, and acid — a tall she-devil of fifty, with slightly mad eyes, dressed in the height of pre-War fashion. Ellery fully expected to find that her tongue was forked; but she shut her lips tightly and, with a cunning perversity, persisted in keeping quiet thenceforward and glaring at him with a venomous intensity that made him uncomfortable inside.

"Baggage?" he said, after he had introduced himself and they had repaired to the library.

"Well, his suitcase is gone," said Gallant hoarsely, "and his clothes are missing — not all, but several suits and plenty of haberdashery. I've questioned all the servants and no one saw him leave the house. We've searched every nook and cranny in the house, and every foot of the grounds. He's just vanished into thin air. . . . Lord, what a mess! He must have gone crazy."

"Ducked out during the night?" Cooper passed his hand over his hair. "But he isn't crazy, Mr. Gallant; you know that. If he's gone, there was a thumping good reason for it."

"Have you looked for a note?" asked Ellery absently, glancing about. The heavy odor had followed them into the library and it bathed the Oriental furnishings with a peculiar fittingness. The door to what he assumed was the missing Japanese's study was closed, and he crossed the room and opened it. There was another door in the study; apparently it led to an extension of the main hall. Miss Merrivel's assailant of the night before, then, had probably entered the study through that door. But why had he stolen the door-stop?

"Of course," said Gallant; they had followed Ellery into the study and were watching him with puzzled absorption. "But there isn't any. He's left without a word."

Ellery nodded; he was kneeling on the thick Oriental rug a few feet behind the library door, scrutinizing a rectangular depression in the nap. Something heavy, about six inches wide and a foot long, had rested on that very spot for a long time; the nap was crushed to a uniform flatness as if from great and continuous pressure. The missing door-stop, obviously; and he rose and lit a cigaret and perched himself on the arm of a huge mahogany chair, carved tortuously in a lotus and dragon motif and

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inlaid with mother-of-pearl.

"Don't you think," suggested Miss Merrivel timidly, "that we ought to telephone the police?"

"No hurry," said Ellery with a cheerful wave of his hand. "Let's sit down and talk things over. There's nothing criminal in a man's quitting his own castle without explanation — even, Miss Gallant, a heathen. I'm not even sure anything's wrong. The little yellow people are a subtle race with thought-processes worlds removed from ours. This business of the pilfered door-stop, however, is provocative. Will someone please describe it to me?"

Miss Merrivel looked helpful; the others glanced at one another, however, with a sort of inert helplessness.

Then Bill Gallant hunched his thick shoulders and growled: "Now, look here, Queen, you're evading the issue." He looked worried and haggard, as if a secret maggot were nibbling at his conscience. "This is certainly a matter for old Jito's attorney, if not for the police. I must call ——"

"You must follow the dictates of your own conscience, of course," said Ellery gently, "but if you will take my advice someone will describe the door-stop for my edification."

"I can tell you exactly," said young Cooper, brushing his thin hair back again with his white, musician's fingers, "because I've handled the thing a number of times and, in fact, signed the express-receipt when it was delivered. It's six inches wide, six inches high, and an even foot long. Perfectly regular in shape, you see, except for the decorative bas-reliefs — the dragons. Typical conventionalized Japanese craftsmanship, by the way. Nothing really remarkable."

'Heathen idolatry," said Miss Letitia distinctly; her ophidian eyes glared their chronic hate with a fanatical fire. "Devil!"

Ellery glanced at her. Then he said: "Miss Merrivel has told me that the door-stop isn't valuable." Cooper and Gallant nodded. "What's its composition?"

"Natural soapstone," said Gallant; his expression was still worried. "You know, that smooth and slippery mineral that's used so much in the Orient — steatite, technically. It's a talc. Jito imports hundred of gadgets made out of it."

"Oh, this door-stop was something from his curio establishment?"

"No. It was sent to the old man four or five months ago as a gift by some friend traveling in Japan."

"A white man?" asked Ellery suddenly.

They all looked blank. Then Cooper said with an uneasy smile: "I don't believe Mr. Kagiwa ever mentioned his name, or said anything about him, Mr. Queen."

"I see," said Ellery, and he smoked for a moment in silence. "Sent, eh? By express?" Cooper nodded. "You're a man of method, Mr. Cooper?"

The secretary looked surprised. "I beg your pardon?"

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"Obviously, obviously. Secretaries have a deplorable habit of saving things. May I see that express-receipt, please? Evidence is always better than testimony, as any lawyer will tell you. The receipt may provide us with a clue — sender's name may indicate . . ."

"Oh," said Cooper. "So that's your notion? I'm sorry, Mr. Queen. There was no sender's name on the receipt. I remember very clearly."

Ellery looked pained. He blew out a curtain of smoke, communing with his thoughts in its folds. When he spoke again it was with abruptness, as if he had decided to take a plunge. "How many dragons are there on this door-stop, Mr. Cooper?"

"Idolatry," repeated Miss Letitia venomously.

Miss Merrivel paled a little. "You think ——"

"Five," said Cooper. "The bottom face, of course, is blank. Five dragons, Mr. Queen."

"Pity it isn't seven," said Ellery without smiling. "The mystic number." And he rose and took a turn about the room, smoking and frowning in the sweet heavy air at the coils of a golden monster embroidered on a silk wall-hanging. Miss Merrivel shivered suddenly and moved closer to the tall thin-faced young man. "Tell me," continued Ellery with a snap of his teeth, turning on his heel and squinting at them through the smoke-haze. "Is your little Jito Kagiwa a Christian?"

Only Miss Letitia was not startled; that woman would have outstared Beelzebub himself. "Lord preserve us!" she cried in a shrill voice. "That devil?"

"Now why," asked Ellery patiently, "do you persist in calling your brother-in-law a devil, Miss Gallant?"

She set her metallic lips and glared. Miss Merrivel said in a warm tone: "He is not. He's a nice kind old gentleman. He may not be a Christian, Mr. Queen, but he isn't a heathen, either. He doesn't believe in anything like that. He's often said so."

"Then he certainly isn't a heathen, strictly speaking," murmured Ellery. "A heathen, you know, is a person belonging to a nation or race neither Christian, Jewish, nor Mohammedan who has not abandoned the original creed of his people."

Miss Letitia looked baffled. But then she shrilled triumphantly: "He is, too! I've often heard him talk of some outlandish belief called — called . . ."

"Shinto," muttered Cooper. "It's not true, Merry, that Mr. Kagiwa doesn't believe in anything. He believes in the essential goodness of mankind, in each man's conscience being his best guide. That's the moral essence of Shinto, isn't it, Mr. Queen?"

"Is it?" murmured Ellery in an absent way. "I suppose so. Most interesting. He wasn't a cultist? Shinto is rather primitive, you know."

"Idolater," said Miss Letitia nastily, like a phonograph needle caught in one groove.

They looked uneasily about them. On the study desk there was a fat-bellied little idol of shiny black obsidian. In a corner stood a squat and powerful suit of Samurai

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armor. The silk of the dragon rippled a little on the wall under the push of the sea breeze coming in through the open window.

"He didn't belong to some ancient secret Japanese society?" persisted Ellery. "Has he had much correspondence from the East? Has he received slant-eyed visitors? Did he seem afraid of anything?"

His voice died away, and the dragon stirred again wickedly, and the Samurai looked on with his sightless, enigmatic, invisible face. The sickly-sweet odor seemed to grow stronger, filling their heads with dizzying, horrid fancies. They looked at Ellery mutely and helplessly, caught in the grip of vague primeval fears.

"And was this door-stop *solid* soapstone?" murmured Ellery, gazing out the window at the heaving Sound. Everything heaved and swayed; the house itself seemed afloat in an endless ocean, bobbing to the breathing of the sea. He waited for their reply, but none came. Big Bill Gallant shuffled his feet; he looked even more worried than before. "It couldn't have been, you know," continued Ellery thoughtfully, answering his own question. He wondered what they were thinking.

"What makes you say that, Mr. Queen?" asked Miss Merrivel in a subdued voice.

"Common-sense. The piece being valueless from a practical standpoint, why was it it stolen last night? For sentimental reasons? The only one for whom it might have possessed such an attachment is Mr. Kagiwa, and I scarcely think he would have struck you over the head, Miss Merrivel, to retrieve his own property if he merely had a fondness for it." Aunt and nephew looked startled. "Oh, you didn't know that, of course. Yes, we had a case of simple but painful assault here last night. Gave Miss Merrivel quite a headache. The bump is, take my word for it, a thing of singular beauty. . . . Did the door-stop possess an esoteric meaning? Was it a symbol of something, a sign, a portent, a *warning*?" Again the breeze stirred the dragon, and they shuddered; the hatred had vanished from Miss Letitia's mad eyes, to be replaced by the naked fear of a small and malicious soul trapped in the filthy den of its own malice at last.

"It —" began Cooper, shaking his head. Then he licked his dry lips and said: "This is the Twentieth Century, Mr. Queen."

"So it is," said Ellery, nodding, "wherefore we shall confine ourselves to sane and demonstrable matters. The practical alternative is that, since the door-stop *was* taken, it was valuable to the taker. But not, obviously, for itself alone. Deduction: It *contained* something valuable. That's why I said it couldn't have been a solid chunk of soapstone."

"That's the most —" said Gallant; his shoulders hunched, and he stopped and stared at Ellery in a fascinated way.

"I beg your pardon?" said Ellery softly.

"Nothing. I was just thinking ——"

"That I had shot straight to the mark, Mr. Gallant?"

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The big young man dropped his gaze and flushed; and he began to pace up and down with his hands loosely behind his back, the worried expression more evident than ever. Miss Merrivel bit her lip and sank into the nearest chair. Cooper looked restive, and Letitia Gallant's stiff clothing made rustling little sounds, like furtive animals in underbrush at night. Then Gallant stopped pacing and said in a rush: "I suppose I may as well come out with it. Yes, you guessed it, Queen, you guessed it." Ellery looked pained. "The door-stop isn't solid. There's a hollow space inside."

"Ah! And what did it contain, Mr. Gallant?"

"Fifty thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills."

It is proverbial that money works miracles. In Jito Kagiwa's study it lived up to its reputation.

The dragon died. The Samurai became an empty shell of crumbling leather and metal. The house ceased rocking and stood firmly on its foundation. The very air freshened and crept into its normal niche and was noticed no more. Money talked in familiar accents and before the logic of its speech the spectre of dread, creeping things vanished in a snuffed instant. They sighed with relief in unison and their eyes cleared again with that peculiar blankness which passes for sanity in the social world. There had been mere money in the door-stop! Miss Merrivel giggled a little.

"Fifty thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills," nodded Mr. Ellery Queen, looking both envious and disappointed in the same instant. "That's an indecent number of hundred-dollar bills, Mr. Gallant. Elucidate."

Bill Gallant elucidated — rapidly, his expression vastly comforted, as if a great weight had been lifted from his mind. Old Kagiwa's business, there was no concealing it longer, was on the verge of bankruptcy. Tariffs on Japanese goods had risen steeply, the universal depression had made heavy inroads on the sales of the products of frivolous industries. Before the China "incident," a year or so before, it would still have been possible to retrench and lie low, weathering the economic storm. But against his stepson's advice old Kagiwa, with the serene, silent, and unconquerable will of his race, had refused to alter his lifelong business policies. Only when ruin stared him in the eyes did his resolution waver, and then it was too late to do more than salvage the battered wreck.

"He did it on the q.t.," said Gallant, shrugging, "and the first I knew about it was the other day when he called me into this room, locked the door, picked up the door-stop — he'd left it on the floor all the time! — unscrewed one of the dragons . . . Came out like a plug. He told me he'd found the secret cavity in the door-stop by accident right after he received it. Nothing in it, he said, and went into some long-winded explanation about the probable origin of the piece. It hadn't been a door-stop originally, of course — don't suppose the Japanese have such things. Well . . . There was the money, in a tight wad, which he'd stowed away in the hole. I told him

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he was a fool to leave it lying around that way, but he said no one knew except him and me. Naturally —" He flushed.

"I see now," said Ellery mildly, "why you were reluctant to tell me about it. It looks bad for you, obviously."

The big young man spread his hands in a helpless gesture. "I didn't steal the damned thing, but who'd believe me?" He sat down, fumbling for a cigaret.

"There's one thing in your favor," murmured Ellery. "Or at least I suppose there is. Are you his heir?"

Gallant looked up wildly. "Yes!"

"Yes, he is," said Cooper in a slow, almost reluctant, voice. "I witnessed the old man's will myself."

"Tut, tut. Much ado about nothing. You naturally wouldn't steal what belongs to you anyway. Buck up, Mr. Gallant; you're safe enough." Ellery sighed and began to button up his coat. "Well, ladies and gentlemen, my interest in the case, I fear, is dissipated. I had foreseen something *outré*. . . ." He smiled and picked up his hat. "This is a matter for the police, after all. Of course, I'll help if I can, but it's been my experience that local officers prefer to work alone. And really, there's nothing more that I can do."

"But what do you think happened?" asked Miss Merrivel in hushed tones. "Do you think poor Mr. Kagiwa ——"

"I'm not a psychologist, Miss Merrivel. Even a psychologist, as a matter of fact, might be baffled by the inner workings of an Oriental's mind. Your policeman doesn't worry about such subtle matters, and I don't doubt the local men will clear this business up in short order. Good day."

Miss Letitia sniffed and swept by Ellery with a disdainful swish of her skirts. Miss Merrivel wearily followed, tugging at her hat. Cooper went to the telephone and Gallant frowned out of the window at the Sound.

"Headquarters?" said Cooper, clearing his throat. "I want to speak to the Chief."

A little of the old heavy-scented, alien silence crept back as they waited.

"One moment," said Ellery from the doorway. "One moment, please." The men turned, surprised. Ellery was smiling apologetically. "I've just discovered something. The human mind is a fearful thing. I've been criminally negligent, gentlemen. There's still another possibility."

"Hold the wire, hold the wire," said Cooper. "Possibility?"

Ellery waved an airy hand. "I may be wrong," he admitted handsomely. "Can either of you gentlemen direct me to an almanac?"

"Almanac?" repeated Gallant, bewildered. "Why, certainly. I don't — There's one on the library table, Queen. Here, I'll get it for you." He disappeared into the adjoining room and returned a moment later with a fat paper-backed volume.

Ellery seized it and riffled pages, humming. Cooper and Gallant exchanged glances;

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and then Cooper shrugged and hung up.

"Ah," said Ellery, dropping his aria like a hot coal. "Ah. Hmm. Well, well. Mind over matter. The pen is mightier . . . I may be wrong," he said quietly, closing the book and taking off his coat, "but the odds are now superbly against it. Useful things, almanacs. . . . Mr. Cooper," he said in a new voice, "let me see that express-receipt."

The metallic quality of the tone brought them both up, stiffening. The secretary got to his feet, his face suffused with blood. "Look here," he growled, "are you insinuating that I've lied to you?"

"Tut, tut," said Ellery. "The receipt, Mr. Cooper, quickly."

Bill Gallant said uneasily: "Of course, Cooper. Do as Mr. Queen says. But I don't see what possible value there can be . . ."

"Value is in the mind, Mr. Gallant. The hand may be quicker than the eye, but the brain is quicker than both of them."

Cooper glared, but he pulled open a drawer of the carved desk and began to rummage about. Finally he came up with a sheaf of motley papers and went through them with reluctance until he found a small yellow slip.

"Here," he said, scowling. "Damned impertinence, *I* think."

"It's not a question," said Ellery gently, "of what *you* think, Mr. Cooper." He picked up the slip and scanned the yellow paper with the painful scrupulosity of an archeologist. It was an ordinary express-receipt, describing the contents of the package delivered, the date, the sending point, charges, and similar information. The name of the sender was missing. The package had been shipped by a Nippon Yusen Kaisha steamer from Yokohama, Japan, had been picked up in San Francisco by the express company, and forwarded to its consignee, Jito Kagiwa, at his Westchester address. Shipping and expressage charges had been prepaid in Yokohama, it appeared, on the basis of the 44-pound weight of the door-stop, which was sketchily described as being of soapstone, 6 by 6 by 12 inches in dimensions, and decorated with dragons in bas-relief.

"Well," said Cooper with a sneer. "I suppose that mess of statistics means something to you."

"This mess of statistics," said Ellery gravely, pocketing the receipt, "means everything to me. Pity if it had been lost. It's like the Rosetta Stone — it's the key to an otherwise mystifying set of facts." He looked pleased with himself, and at the same time his gray eyes were watchful. "The old adage was wrong. It isn't safety that you find in numbers, but enlightenment."

Gallant threw up his hands. "You're talking gibberish, Queen."

"I'm talking sense." Ellery stopped smiling. "You gentlemen are excused. By all means the Chief of Police must be called — but it's I who'll call him and, by your leave . . . alone."

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"I was not to be cheated of my tidbit of *bizarrerie*," announced Mr. Ellery Queen that evening, "after all." He was serene and self-contained. He was perched on the edge of the study desk, and his hand played with the belly of the obsidian image.

Cooper, Miss Merrivel, the two Gallants stared at him. They were all in the last stages of nervousness. The house was rocking again, and the dragon quivered in all his coils in the wind coming through the open window; and the Samurai had magically taken watchful life unto himself once more. The sky through the window was dark and dappled with blacker clouds; the moon had not yet slipped from under the hem of the sea.

Ellery had departed from the Kagiwa mansion after his telephonic conversation with the Chief of Police, to be seen no more by interested mortal eyes until evening. When he had returned, there were men with him. These men, quiet and solid creatures, had not come into the house. No one had approached the Gallants, the secretary, the nurse, the servants. Instead the deputation had disappeared, swallowed up by the darkness. Now strange clankings and swishings were audible from the sea outside the study window, but no one dared rise and look.

And Ellery said: " 'What a world were this, how unendurable its weight, if they whom Death had sundered did not meet again.' A moving thought. And very apt on this occasion. We shall meet Death tonight, my friends; and even more strangely, the weight shall be lifted. As Southey predicted."

They gaped, utterly bewildered. From the night outside the clankings and swishings continued, and occasionally there was the far shout of a man.

Ellery lit a cigaret. "I find," he said, inhaling deeply, "that once more I have been in error. I demonstrated to you this morning that the most likely reason for the theft of the door-stop was that it was stolen for its contents. I was wrong. It was not stolen for its contents. It was never intended that the belly of the dragon should be ravished."

"But the fifty thousand dollars —" began Miss Merrivel weakly.

"Mr. Queen," cried Bill Gallant, "what's going on here? What are those policemen doing outside? What are those noises? You owe us ——"

"Logic," murmured Ellery, "has a way of being slippery. Quite like soapstone, Mr. Gallant. It eluded my fingers today. I pointed out that the door-stop could *not* have been stolen for itself. I was wrong again. It could have been stolen for itself in one remote contingency. There was one value possible to the door-stop beyond its worth in dollars and cents, or in a sentiment attached to it, or in its significance as a symbol. And that was — *its utility*."

"Utility?" gasped Cooper. "You mean somebody stole it to use as a door-stop?"

"That's absurd, of course. But there is still another possible utility, Mr. Cooper. What are the characteristics of this piece of carved stone which might be made use of? Well, what are its chief points physically? Its substance and weight. It is stone, and it weighs 44 pounds."

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Gallant made a queer brushing-aside gesture with one hand and rose as if under compulsion and went to the window. The others wavered, and then they too rose and went to the window, pressing eagerly toward the last, their pent-up fears and curiosity urging them on. Ellery watched them quietly.

The moon was rising now. The scene below was blue-black and sharp, a miniature etching in motion. A large rowboat was anchored a few yards from the rear of the Kagiwa house. There were men in it, and apparatus. Someone was leaning overside, gazing intently into the water. The surface suddenly quickened into concentric life, becoming violently agitated. A man's dripping head appeared, open mouth sucking in air. And then, half-nude, he climbed into the boat and said something, and the apparatus creaked, and a rope emerged from the blue-black water and began to wind about a small winch.

"But why," came Ellery's voice from behind them, "should an object be stolen because it is stone and weighs 44 pounds? Regarded in this light, the view became brilliantly clear. A man was mysteriously and inexplicably missing — a sick, defenseless, wealthy old man. A heavy stone was missing. And there was the sea at his back door. Put one, two, and three together and you have ——"

Someone shouted hoarsely from the boat. In the full moon a dripping mass emerged from the water at the end of the rope. As it was pulled into the boat the silver light revealed it as a mass made up of three parts. One was a suitcase. Another was a small rectangular chunk of stone with carving on it. And the third was the stiff naked body of a little old man with yellow skin and slanted eyes.

"And you have," continued Ellery sharply, slipping from the edge of the desk and poking the muzzle of an automatic into the small of Bill Gallant's rigid back, "the murderer of Jito Kagiwa!"

The shouts of the triumphant fishers made meaningless sound in the old Japanese's study, and Bill Gallant without turning or moving a muscle said in a dead voice: "You damned devil. How did you know?"

Miss Letitia's bitter mouth opened and closed without achieving the dignity of speech.

"I knew," said Ellery, holding the automatic quite still, "because I knew that the door-stop had no hollow at all, that it was a piece of solid stone."

"You couldn't have known that. You never saw it. You were guessing. Besides, you said ——"

"That's the second time you have accused me of guessing," said Ellery in an aggrieved tone. "I assure you, my dear Mr. Gallant, that I did nothing of the sort. But knowing that the door-stop was solid, I knew that you had lied when you maintained that you had seen with your own eyes Kagiwa's withdrawal of the dragon 'plug,' that you had seen the 'cavity' and the 'money' in it. And so I asked myself why such an

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obviously distressed and charming gentleman had lied. And I saw that it could only have been because you had something to conceal and were sure the door-stop would never be found to give you the lie."

The waters were stilling under the moon.

"But to be sure that the door-stop would never be found, you had to know where the door-stop was. To know where it was, you had to be the person who had disposed of it after striking Miss Merrivel over the head and stealing it from this room, unconsciously making that slithery, dragonish sound in the process which was merely the scuffing of your shoes in the thick pile of this rug. But the person who disposed of the door-stop was the person who disposed of the carcass of gentle little Jito Kagiwa; which is to say, the murderer. No, no, my dear Gallant; be fair. It wasn't precisely guesswork."

Miss Merrivel said in a ghastly voice: "Mr. Gallant. I can't — But why did you do this awful — awful . . ."

"I think I can tell you that," sighed Ellery. "It was apparent to me, when I saw that his story of the cache in the door-stop was a lie, that he had probably planned to tell that ingenious story from the beginning. Why? One reason might have been to cover up the real motive for the theft of the carved piece; divert the trail from its use as a mere weight for a dead body to a fabricated use as the receptacle of a fortune, and its theft for that reason. But why the lie about the fifty thousand dollars? Why so detailed, so specific, so careful? Was it because you had embezzled fifty thousand dollars from your stepfather's business, Mr. Gallant, knew that the discovery of this shortage was imminent, and therefore created a figmentary thief who last night stole the money which you had stolen and dissipated possibly months ago?"

Bill Gallant was silent.

"And so you built up a series of events," murmured Ellery. "You arranged the old gentleman's bedclothes during the night to form a human figure, as if he had done it himself. You threw some clothes of his in one of his suitcases, as if he had planned to flee. In fact, you arranged the whole thing to give the impression that Mr. Kagiwa, whose business I have no doubt is shaky — largely due to your peculations — had cut loose from his Occidental surroundings once and for all time and vanished into the mysterious Orient from which he had come . . . with the remnants of his fortune. In this way there would be no body to look for, no murder, indeed, to suspect; and you yourself would escape the consequences of your original crime of grand larceny. For you knew that, like all honorable and gentle men, your stepfather, who had given you everything, would forgive everything except your crime against honor. Had Mr. Kagiwa discovered your larceny, all would have been lost."

But Bill Gallant said nothing to these inexorable words; he was still staring out the window where nothing more was to be seen except the quieting water. The rowboat, the stone, the suitcase, the dead body, the men had vanished.

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And Ellery nodded at that paralyzed back with something like sad satisfaction.

"And the inheritance," muttered Cooper. "Of course, he was the heir. Clever, clever."

"Stupid," said Ellery gently, "stupid. All crime is stupid."

Gallant said in the same dead voice: "I still think you were guessing about the door-stop being solid," as if he were engaged in a polite difference of opinion. Ellery was not fooled. His grip tightened on the automatic. The window was open and the water might look inviting to a desperate man, for whom even death would be an escape.

"No, no," said Ellery, almost protesting. "Please give the devil his due. It was all obscure to me, you know, until on my way out I thought of the fact that the door-stop was made of soapstone. I knew soapstone to be fairly heavy. I knew the piece was almost perfectly regular in shape, and therefore admissible to elementary calculation. It was conceivable that I could test the accuracy of your statement that the door-stop was hollow. And so I came back and asked to consult an almanac. Once I had run across in such a reference book a list of the weights of common minerals. I looked up soapstone. And there it was."

"There what was?" asked Gallant, almost with curiosity.

"The almanac said that 1 cubic foot of soapstone weighs between 162 and 175 pounds. The door-stop was of soapstone; what were its dimensions? 6 by 6 by 12 inches, or 432 cubic inches. In other words, ¼ cubic foot. Or, by computing from the almanac's figures and allowing for the small additional weight of the shallow bas-relief dragons, the door-stop should weigh one-quarter of the cubic-foot poundage, which is 44 pounds."

"But that's what the receipt said," muttered Cooper.

"Quite so. But what do those 44 pounds represent? They represent 44 pounds of *solid* soapstone! Mr. Gallant had said the door-stop was *not* solid, had a hollow inside large enough to hold fifty thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills. That's five hundred bills. Any space large enough to contain five hundred bills, no matter how tightly rolled or compressed, would make the total weight of the door-stop considerably *less* than 44 pounds. And so I knew that the door-stop was solid and that Mr. Gallant had lied."

Heavy feet tramped outside. Suddenly the room was full of men. The corpse of Jito Kagiwa was deposited on a divan, naked and yellow as old marble, where it dripped quietly, almost apologetically. Bill Gallant was turned about, still frozen, and they saw that his eyes, too, were dead as they regarded the corpse . . . as if for the first time the enormity of what he had done had struck home.

Ellery took the heavy door-stop, glistening from the sea, from the hand of a policeman and turned it over in his fingers. And he looked up at the wall and smiled in friendly fashion at the dragon, which was now obviously a pretty thing of silk and golden threads and nothing more.

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LONG SHOT

"ONE MOMENT, dear. My favorite fly's just walked into the parlor," cried Paula Paris into her ashes-of-roses telephone. "Oh, Ellery, do sit down! . . . No, dear, you're fishing. This one's a grim hombre with silv'ry eyes, and I have an option on him. Call me tomorrow about the Garbo excitement. And I'll expect your flash the moment Crawford springs her new *coiffure* on palpitating Miss America."

And, the serious business of her Hollywood gossip column concluded, Miss Paris hung up and turned her lips pursily towards Mr. Queen. Mr. Queen had cured Miss Paris of homophobia, or morbid fear of crowds, by the brilliant counter-psychology of making love to her. Alas for the best-laid plans! The patient had promptly succumbed to the cure and, what was worse, in succumbing had infected the physician, too.

"I do believe," murmured the lovely patient, "that I need an extended treatment, Doctor Queen."

So the poor fellow absently gave Miss Paris an extended treatment, after which he rubbed the lipstick from his mouth.

"No oomph," said Miss Paris critically, holding him off and surveying his gloomy countenance. "Ellery Queen, you're in a mess again."

"Hollywood," mumbled Mr. Queen. "The land God forgot. No logic. Disorderly creation. The abiding place of chaos. Paula, your Hollywood is driving me c-double-o-ditto!"

"You poor imposed-upon Wimpie," crooned Miss Paris, drawing him onto her spacious maple settee. "Tell Paula all about the nasty old place."

So, with Miss Paris's soft arms about him, Mr. Queen unburdened himself. It seemed that Magna Studios ("The Movies Magnificent"), to whom his soul was chartered, had ordered him as one of its staff writers to concoct a horseracing plot with a fresh patina. A mystery, of course, since Mr. Queen was supposed to know something about crime.

"With fifty writers on the lot who spend all their time — and money — following the ponies," complained Mr. Queen bitterly, "of course they have to pick on the one serf in their thrall who doesn't know a fetlock from a wither. Paula, I'm a sunk scrivener."

"You don't know *anything* about racing?"

"I'm not interested in racing. I've never even *seen* a race," said Mr. Queen doggedly.

"Imagine that!" said Paula, awed. And she was silent. After a while Mr. Queen twisted in her embrace and said in accusing despair: "Paula, you're thinking of

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something."

She kissed him and sprang from the settee. "The wrong tense, darling, I've *thought* of something!"

Paula told him all about old John Scott as they drove out into the green and yellow ranch country.

Scott was a vast, shapeless Caledonian with a face as craggy as his native heaths and a disposition not less dour. His inner landscape was bleak except where horses breathed and browsed; and this vulnerable spot had proved his undoing, for he had made two fortunes breeding thoroughbreds and had lost both by racing and betting on them.

"Old John's never stood for any of the crooked dodges of the racing game," said Paula. "He fired Weed Williams, the best jockey he ever had, and had him blackballed by every decent track in the country, so that Williams became a saddle-maker or something, just because of a peccadillo another owner would have winked at. And yet — the inconsistent old coot! — a few years later he gave Williams's son a job, and Whitey's going to ride *Danger*, John's best horse, in the Handicap next Saturday."

"You mean the $100,000 Santa Anita Handicap everybody's in a dither about out here?"

"Yes. Anyway, old John's got a scrunchy little ranch, *Danger*, his daughter Kathryn, and practically nothing else except a stable of also-rans and breeding disappointments."

"So far," remarked Mr. Queen, "it sounds like the beginning of a Class B movie."

"Except," sighed Paula, "that it's not entertaining. John's really on a spot. If Whitey doesn't ride *Danger* to a win in the Handicap, it's the end of the road for John Scott. . . . Speaking about roads, here we are."

They turned into a dirt road and ploughed dustily towards a ramshackle ranch-house. The road was pitted, the fences dilapidated, the grassland patchy with neglect.

"With all his troubles," grinned Ellery, "I fancy he won't take kindly to this quest for Racing in Five Easy Lessons."

"Meeting a full-grown man who knows nothing about racing may give the old gentleman a laugh. Lord knows he needs one."

A Mexican cook directed them to Scott's private track and they found him leaning his weight upon a sagging rail, his small buried eyes puckered on a cloud of dust eddying along the track at the far turn. His thick fingers clutched a stop-watch.

A man in high-heeled boots sat on the rail two yards away, a shotgun in his lap pointing carelessly at the head of a too well-dressed gentleman with a foreign air who was talking to the back of Scott's shaggy head. The well-dressed man sat in a glistening roadster beside a hard-faced chauffeur.

"You got my proposition, John?" said the well-dressed man, with a toothy smile.

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"You got it?"

"Get the hell off my ranch, Santelli," said John Scott, without turning his head.

"Sure," said Santelli, still smiling. "You think my proposition over, hey, or maybe somethin' happen to your nag, hey?"

They saw the old man quiver, but he did not turn; and Santelli nodded curtly to his driver. The big roadster roared away.

The dust-cloud on the track rolled towards them and they saw a small, taut figure in sweater and cap perched atop a gigantic stallion, black-coated and lustrous with sweat. The horse was bounding along like a huge cat, his neck arched. He thundered magnificently by.

"2:02⅘," they heard Scott mutter to his stop-watch. "*Rosemont's* ten-furlong time for the Handicap in '37. Not bad . . . Whitey!" he bellowed to the jockey, who had pulled the black stallion up. "Rub him down good!"

The jockey grinned and pranced *Danger* towards the adjacent stables.

The man with the shotgun drawled: "You got more company, John."

The old man whirled, frowning deeply; his craggy face broke into a thousand wrinkles and he engulfed Paula's slim hand in his two paws. "Paula! It's fine to see ye. Who's this?" he demanded, fastening his cold keen eyes on Ellery.

"Mr. Ellery Queen. But how is Katie? And *Danger?*"

"You saw him." Scott gazed after the dancing horse. "Fit as a fiddle. He'll carry the handicap weight of a hundred twenty pounds Saturday an' never feel it. Did it just now with the leads on him. Paula, did ye see that murderin' scalawag?"

"The fashion-plate who just drove away?"

"That was Santelli, and ye heard what he said might happen to *Danger.*" The old man stared bitterly down the road.

"Santelli!" Paula's serene face was shocked.

"Bill, go look after the stallion." The man with the shotgun slipped off the rail and waddled towards the stable. "Just made me an offer for my stable. Hell, the dirty thievin' bookie owns the biggest stable west o' the Rockies — what's he want with my picayune outfit?"

"He owns *Broomstick,* the Handicap favorite, doesn't he?" asked Paula quietly. "And *Danger* is figured strongly in the running, isn't he?"

"Quoted five to one now, but track odds'll shorten his price. *Broomstick's* two to five," growled Scott.

"It's very simple, then. By buying your horse, Santelli can control the race, owning the two best horses."

"Lassie, lassie," sighed Scott. "I'm an old mon, an' I know these thieves. Handicap purse is $100,000. And Santelli just offered me $100,000 for my stable!" Paula whistled. "It don't wash. My whole shebang ain't worth it. *Danger's* no cinch to win.

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Is Santelli buyin' up all the other horses in the race, too? — the big outfits? I tell ye it's somethin' else, and it's rotten." Then he shook his heavy shoulders straight. "But here I am gabbin' about my troubles. What brings ye out here, lassie?"

"Mr. Queen here, who's a — well, a friend of mine," said Paula, coloring, "has to think up a horse-racing plot for a movie, and I thought you could help him. He doesn't know a thing about racing."

Scott stared at Mr. Queen, who coughed apologetically. "Well, sir, I don't know but that ye're not a lucky mon. Ye're welcome to the run o' the place. Go over an' talk to Whitey; he knows the racket backwards. I'll be with ye in a few minutes."

The old man lumbered off, and Paula and Ellery sauntered towards the stables.

"Who is this ogre Santelli?" asked Ellery with a frown.

"A gambler and bookmaker with a national hook-up." Paula shivered a little. "Poor John. I don't like it, Ellery."

They turned a corner of the big stable and almost bumped into a young man and a young woman in the lee of the wall, clutching each other desperately and kissing as if they were about to be torn apart for eternity.

"Pardon *us*," said Paula, pulling Ellery back.

The young lady, her eyes crystal with tears, blinked at her. "Is — is that Paula Paris?" she sniffled.

"The same, Kathryn," smiled Paula. "Mr. Queen, Miss Scott. What on earth's the matter?"

"Everything," cried Miss Scott tragically. "Oh, Paula, we're in the most awful trouble!"

Her amorous companion backed bashfully off. He was a slender young man clad in grimy, odoriferous overalls. He wore spectacles floury with the chaff of oats, and there was a grease smudge on one emotional nostril.

"Miss Paris — Mr. Queen. This is Hank Halliday, my — my boy-friend," sobbed Kathryn.

"I see the whole plot," said Paula sympathetically. "Papa doesn't approve of Katie's taking up with a stablehand, the snob! and it's tragedy all around."

"Hank *isn't* a stablehand," cried Kathryn, dashing the tears from her cheeks, which were rosy with indignation. "He's a college graduate who ——"

"Kate," said the odoriferous young man with dignity, "let me explain, please. Miss Paris, I have a character deficiency. I am a physical coward."

"Heavens, so am I!" said Paula.

"But a man, you see . . . I am particularly afraid of animals. Horses, specifically." Mr. Halliday shuddered. "I took this — this filthy job to conquer my unreasonable fear." Mr. Halliday's sensitive chin hardened. "I have not yet conquered it, but when I do I shall find myself a real job. And then," he said firmly, embracing Miss Scott's

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trembling shoulders, "I shall marry Kathryn, papa or no papa."

"Oh, I hate him for being so mean!" sobbed Katie.

"And I —" began Mr. Halliday somberly.

"Hankus-Pankus!" yelled a voice from the stable. "What the hell you paid for, anyway? Come clean up this mess before I slough you one!"

"Yes, Mr. Williams," said Hankus-Pankus hastily, and he hurried away with an apologetic half-bow. His lady-love ran sobbing off towards the ranch-house.

Mr. Queen and Miss Paris regarded each other. Then Mr. Queen said: "I'm getting a plot, b'gosh, but it's the wrong one"

"Poor kids," sighed Paula. "Well, talk to Whitey Williams and see if the divine spark ignites."

During the next several days Mr. Queen ambled about the Scott ranch, talking to Jockey Williams, to the bespectacled Mr. Halliday — who, he discovered, knew as little about racing as he and cared even less — to a continuously tearful Kathryn, to the guard named Bill — who slept in the stable near *Danger* with one hand on his shotgun — and to old John himself. He learned much about jockeys, touts, racing procedure, gear, handicaps, purses, forfeits, stewards, the ways of bookmakers, famous races and horses and owners and tracks; but the divine spark perversely refused to ignite.

So, on Friday at dusk, when he found himself unaccountably ignored at the Scott ranch, he glumly drove up into the Hollywood hills for a laving in the waters of Gilead.

He found Paula in her garden soothing two anguished young people. Katie Scott was still weeping and Mr. Halliday, the self-confessed craven, for once dressed in an odorless garment, was awkwardly pawing her golden hair.

"More tragedy?" said Mr. Queen. "I should have known. I've just come from your father's ranch, and there's a pall over it."

"Well, there should be!" cried Kathryn. "I told my father where *he* gets off. Treating Hank that way! I'll never speak to him as long as I live! He's — he's *unnatural!*"

"Now Katie," said Mr. Halliday reprovingly, "that's no way to speak of your own father."

"Hank Halliday, if you had one spark of manhood ——!"

Mr. Halliday stiffened as if his beloved had jabbed him with the end of a live wire.

"I didn't mean that, Hankus," sobbed Kathryn, throwing herself into his arms. "I know you can't help being a coward. But when he knocked you down and you didn't even ——"

Mr. Halliday worked the left side of his jaw thoughtfully. "You know, Mr. Queen, something happened to me when Mr. Scott struck me. For an instant I felt a strange

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— er — lust. I really believe if I'd had a revolver — and if I knew how to handle one — I might easily have committed murder then. I saw — I believe that's the phrase — red."

"Hank!" cried Katie in horror.

Hank sighed, the homicidal light dying out of his faded blue eyes.

"Old John," explained Paula, winking at Ellery, "found these two cuddling again in the stable, and I suppose he thought it was setting a bad example for *Danger*, whose mind should be on the race tomorrow; so he fired Hank, and Katie blew up and told John off, and she's left his home forever."

"To discharge me is his privilege," said Mr. Halliday coldly, "but now I owe him no loyalty whatever. I shall *not* bet on *Danger* to win the Handicap!"

"I hope the big brute loses," sobbed Katie.

"Now Kate," said Paula firmly, "I've heard enough of this nonsense. I'm going to speak to you like a Dutch aunt."

Katie sobbed on.

"Mr. Halliday," said Mr. Queen formally, "I believe this is our cue to seek a slight libation."

"Kathryn!"

"Hank!"

Mr. Queen and Miss Paris tore the lovers apart.

It was a little after ten o'clock when Miss Scott, no longer weeping but facially still tear-ravaged, crept out of Miss Paris's white frame house and got into her dusty little car.

As she turned her key in the ignition lock and stepped on the starter, a harsh bass voice from the shadows of the back seat said: "Don't yell. Don't make a sound. Turn your car around and keep going till I tell you to stop."

"Eek!" screeched Miss Scott.

A big leathery hand clamped over her trembling mouth.

After a few moments the car moved away.

Mr. Queen called for Miss Paris the next day and they settled down to a snail's pace, heading for Arcadia eastward, near which lay the beautiful Santa Anita racecourse.

"What happened to Lachrymose Katie last night?" demanded Mr. Queen.

"Oh, I got her to go back to the ranch. She left me a little after ten, a very miserable little girl. What did you do with Hankus-Pankus?"

"I oiled him thoroughly and then took him home. He'd hired a room in a Hollywood boarding-house. He cried on my shoulder all the way. It seems old John also

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kicked him in the seat of his pants, and he's been brooding murderously over it."

"Poor Hankus. The only honest male I've ever met."

"I'm afraid of horses, too," said Mr. Queen hurriedly.

"Oh, you! You're detestable. You haven't kissed me once today."

Only the cooling balm of Miss Paris's lips, applied at various points along U.S. Route 66, kept Mr. Queen's temper from boiling over. The roads were sluggish with traffic. At the track it was even worse. It seemed as though every last soul in Southern California had converged upon Santa Anita at once, in every manner of conveyance, from the dusty Model T's of dirt farmers to the shiny metal monsters of the movie stars. The magnificent stands seethed with noisy thousands, a wriggling mosaic of color and movement. The sky was blue, the sun warm, zephyrs blew, and the track was fast. A race was being run, and the sleek animals were small and fleet and sharply focused in the clear light.

"What a marvelous day for the Handicap!" cried Paula, dragging Ellery along. "Oh, there's Bing, and Al Jolson, and Bob Burns! . . . Hello! . . . And Joan and Clark and Carole . . ."

Despite Miss Paris's overenthusiastic trail-breaking, Mr. Queen arrived at the track stalls in one piece. They found old John Scott watching with the intentness of a Red Indian as a stablehand kneaded *Danger's* velvety forelegs. There was a stony set to Scott's gnarled face that made Paul cry: "John! Is anything wrong with *Danger*?"

"*Danger's* all right," said the old man curtly. "It's Kate. We had a blow-up over that Halliday boy an' she ran out on me."

"Nonsense, John. I sent her back home last night myself."

"She was at your place? She didn't come home."

"She didn't?" Paula's little nose wrinkled.

"I guess," growled Scott, "she's run off with that Halliday coward. He's not a man, the lily-livered ——"

"We can't all be heroes, John. He's a good boy, and he loves Katie."

The old man stared stubbornly at his stallion, and after a moment they left and made their way towards their box.

"Funny," said Paula in a scared voice. "She couldn't have run off with Hank; he was with you. And I'd swear she meant to go back to the ranch last night."

"Now, Paula," said Mr. Queen gently. "She's all right." But his eyes were thoughtful and a little perturbed.

Their box was not far from the paddock. During the preliminary races, Paula kept searching the sea of faces with her binoculars.

"Well, well," said Mr. Queen suddenly, and Paula became conscious of a rolling thunder from the stands about them.

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"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"*Broomstick*, the favorite, has been scratched," said Mr. Queen dryly.

"*Broomstick?* Santelli's horse?" Paula stared at him, paling. "But why? Ellery, there's something in this ——"

"It seems he's pulled a tendon and can't run."

"Do you think," whispered Paula, "that Santelli had anything to do with Katie's . . . not getting . . . home?"

"Possible," muttered Ellery. "But I can't seem to fit the blinking thing ——"

"Here they come!"

The shout shook the stands. A line of regal animals began to emerge from the paddock. Paula and Ellery rose with the other restless thousands, and craned. The Handicap contestants were parading to the post!

There was *High Tor*, who had gone lame in the stretch at the Derby two years before and had not run a race since. This was to be his come-back; the insiders held him in a contempt which the public apparently shared, for he was quoted at 50 to 1. There was little *Fighting Billy*. There was *Equator*, prancing sedately along with Buzz Hickey up. There was *Danger!* Glossy black, gigantic, imperial, *Danger* was nervous. Whitey Williams was having a difficult time controlling him and a stablehand was struggling at his bit.

Old John Scott, his big shapeless body unmistakable even at this distance, lumbered from the paddock towards his dancing stallion, apparently to soothe him.

Paula gasped. Ellery said quickly: "What is it?"

"There's Hank Halliday in the crowd. Up there! Right above the spot where *Danger's* passing. About fifty feet from John Scott. And Kathryn's not with him!"

Ellery took the glasses from her and located Halliday.

Paula sank into her chair. "Ellery, I've the queerest feeling. There's something wrong. See how pale he is . . ."

The powerful glasses brought Halliday to within a few inches of Ellery's eyes. The boy's glasses were steamed over; he was shaking, as if he had a chill; and yet Ellery could see the globules of perspiration on his cheeks.

And then Mr. Queen stiffened very abruptly.

John Scott had just reached the head of *Danger;* his thick arm was coming up to pull the stallion's head down. And in that instant Mr. Hankus-Pankus Halliday fumbled in his clothes; and in the next his hand appeared clasping a snubnosed automatic. Mr. Queen very nearly cried out. For, the short barrel wavering, the automatic in Mr. Halliday's trembling hands pointed in the general direction of John Scott, there was an explosion, and a puff of smoke blew out of the muzzle.

Miss Paris leaped to her feet, and Miss Paris did cry out.

"Why, the crazy young fool!" said Mr. Queen dazedly.

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Frightened by the shot, which had gone wild, *Danger* reared. The other horses began to kick and dance. In a moment the place below boiled with panic-stricken thoroughbreds. Scott, clinging to *Danger's* head, half-turned in an immense astonishment and looked inquiringly upwards. Whitey struggled desperately to control the frantic stallion.

And then Mr. Halliday shot again. And again. And a fourth time. And at some instant, in the spaces between those shots, the rearing horse got between John Scott and the automatic in Mr. Halliday's shaking hand.

Danger's four feet left the turf. Then, whinnying in agony, flanks heaving, he toppled over on his side.

"Oh, gosh; oh, *gosh*," said Paula biting her handkerchief.

"Let's go!" shouted Mr. Queen, and he plunged for the spot.

By the time they reached the place where Mr. Halliday had fearfully discharged his automatic, the bespectacled youth had disappeared. The people who had stood about him were still too stunned to move. Elsewhere, the stands were in pandemonium.

In the confusion, Ellery and Paula managed to slip through the inadequate track-police cordon hastily thrown about the fallen *Danger* and his milling rivals. They found old John on his knees beside the black stallion, his big hands steadily stroking the glossy, veined neck. Whitey, pale and bewildered-looking, had stripped off the tiny saddle, and the track veterinary was examining a bullet-wound in *Danger's* side, near the shoulder. A group of track officials conferred excitedly nearby.

"He saved my life," said old John in a low voice to no one in particular. "He saved my life."

The veterinary looked up. "Sorry, Mr. Scott," he said grimly. "*Danger* won't run this race."

"No. I suppose not." Scott licked his leathery lips. "Is it — mon, is it serious?"

"Can't tell till I dig out the bullet. We'll have to get him out of here and into the hospital right away."

An official said: "Tough luck, Scott. You may be sure we'll do our best to find the scoundrel who shot your horse."

The old man's lips twisted. He climbed to his feet and looked down at the heaving flanks of his fallen thoroughbred. Whitey Williams trudged away with *Danger's* gear, head hanging.

A moment later the loud-speaker system proclaimed that *Danger*, Number 5, had been scratched, and that the Handicap would be run immediately the other contestants could be quieted and lined up at the stall-barrier.

"All right, folks, clear out," said a track policeman as a hospital van rushed up, followed by a hoisting truck.

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"What are you doing about the man who shot this horse?" demanded Mr. Queen, not moving.

"Ellery," whispered Paula nervously, tugging at his arm.

"We'll get him; got a good description. Move on, please."

"Well," said Mr. Queen slowly, "I know who he is, do you see."

"Ellery!"

"I saw him and recognized him."

They were ushered into the Steward's office just as the announcement was made that *High Tor*, at 50 to 1, had won the Santa Anita Handicap, purse $100,000, by two and a half lengths . . . almost as long a shot, in one sense, as the shot which had laid poor *Danger* low, commented Mr. Queen to Miss Paris, *sotto voce*.

"Halliday?" said John Scott with heavy contempt. "That yellow-livered pup try to shoot me?"

"I couldn't possibly be mistaken, Mr. Scott," said Ellery.

"I saw him, too, John," sighed Paula.

"Who is this Halliday?" demanded the chief of the track police.

Scott told him in monosyllables, relating their quarrel of the day before. "I knocked him down an' kicked him. I guess the only way he could get back at me was with a gun. An' *Danger* took the rap, poor beastie." For the first time his voice shook.

"Well, we'll get him; he can't have left the park," said the police chief grimly. "I've got it sealed tighter than a drum."

"Did you know," murmured Mr. Queen, "that Mr. Scott's daughter Kathryn has been missing since last night?"

Old John flushed slowly. "You think — my Kate had somethin' to do ——"

"Don't be silly, John!" said Paula.

"At any rate," said Mr. Queen dryly, "her disappearance and the attack here today can't be a coincidence. I'd advise you to start a search for Miss Scott immediately. And, by the way, send for *Danger's* gear. I'd like to examine it."

"Say, who the devil are you?" growled the chief.

Mr. Queen told him negligently. The chief looked properly awed. He telephoned to various police headquarters, and he sent for *Danger's* gear.

Whitey Williams, still in his silks, carried the high small racing saddle in and dumped it on the floor.

"John, I'm awful sorry about what happened," he said in a low voice.

"It ain't your fault, Whitey." The big shoulders drooped.

"Ah, Williams, thank you," said Mr. Queen briskly. "This *is* the saddle *Danger* was wearing a few minutes ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"Exactly as it was when you stripped it off him after the shots?"

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"Yes, sir."

"Has anyone had an opportunity to tamper with it?"

"No, sir. I been with it ever since, and no one's come near it but me."

Mr. Queen nodded and knelt to examine the empty-pocketed saddle. Observing the scorched hole in the flap, his brow puckered in perplexity.

"By the way, Whitey," he asked, "how much do you weigh?"

"Hundred and seven."

Mr. Queen frowned. He rose, dusted his knees delicately, and beckoned the chief of police. They conferred in undertones. The policeman looked baffled, shrugged, and hurried out.

When he returned, a certain familiar-appearing gentleman in too-perfect clothes and a foreign air accompanied him. The gentleman looked sad.

"I hear some crackpot took a couple o' shots at you, John," he said sorrowfully, "an' got your nag instead. Tough luck."

There was a somewhat quizzical humor behind this ambiguous statement which brought old John's head up in a flash of belligerence.

"You dirty, thievin' ——"

"Mr. Santelli," greeted Mr. Queen. "When did you know that *Broomstick* would have to be scratched?"

"*Broomstick?*" Mr. Santelli looked mildly surprised at this irrelevant question. "Why, last week."

"So that's why you offered to buy Scott's stable — to get control of *Danger?*"

"Sure." Mr. Santelli smiled genially. "He was hot. With my nag out, he looked like a cinch."

"Mr. Santelli, you're what is colloquially known as a cockeyed liar." Mr. Santelli ceased smiling. "You wanted to buy *Danger* not to see him win, but to see him lose!"

Mr. Santelli looked unhappy. "Who is this," he appealed to the police chief, "Mister Wacky himself?"

"In my embryonic way," said Mr. Queen, "I have been making a few inquiries in the last several days and my information has it that your bookmaking organization covered a lot of *Danger* money when *Danger* was five to one."

"Say, you got somethin' there," said Mr. Santelli, suddenly deciding to be candid.

"You covered about two hundred thousand dollars, didn't you?"

"Wow," said Mr. Santelli. "This guy's got idears, ain't he?"

"So," smiled Mr. Queen, "if *Danger* won the Handicap you stood to drop a very frigid million dollars did you not?"

"But it's my old friend John some guy tried to rub out," pointed out Mr. Santelli gently. "Go peddle your papers somewheres else, Mister Wack."

John Scott looked bewilderedly from the gambler to Mr. Queen. His jaw-muscles

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were bunched and jerky.

At this moment a special officer deposited among them Mr. Hankus-Pankus Halliday, his spectacles awry on his nose and his collar ripped away from his prominent Adam's-apple.

John Scott sprang towards him, but Ellery caught his flailing arms in time to prevent a slaughter.

"Murderer! Scalawag! Horse-killer!" roared old John. "What did ye do with my lassie?"

Mr. Halliday said gravely: "Mr. Scott, you have my sympathy."

The old man's mouth flew open. Mr. Halliday folded his scrawny arms with dignity, glaring at the policeman who had brought him in. "There was no necessity to manhandle me. I'm quite ready to face the — er — music. But I shall not answer any questions."

"No gat on him, Chief," said the policeman by his side.

"What did you do with the automatic?" demanded the chief. No answer. "You admit you had it in for Mr. Scott and tried to kill him?" No answer. "Where is Miss Scott?"

"You see," said Mr. Halliday stonily, "how useless it is."

"Hankus-Pankus," murmured Mr. Queen, "you are superb. You don't know where Kathryn is, do you?"

Hankus-Pankus instantly looked alarmed. "Oh, I say, Mr. Queen. Don't make me talk. Please!"

"But you're expecting her to join you here, aren't you?"

Hankus paled. The policeman said: "He's a nut. He didn't even try to make a getaway. He didn't even fight back."

"Hank! Darling! Father!" cried Katie Scott; and, straggle-haired and dusty-faced, she flew into the office and flung herself upon Mr. Halliday's thin bosom.

"Katie!" screamed Paula, flying to the girl and embracing her; and in a moment all three, Paula and Kathryn and Hankus, were weeping in concert, while old John's jaw dropped even lower and all but Mr. Queen, who was smiling, stood rooted to their bits of Space in timeless stupefaction.

Then Miss Scott ran to her father and clung to him, and old John's shoulders lifted a little, even though the expression of bewilderment persisted; and she burrowed her head into her father's deep, broad chest.

In the midst of this incredible scene the track veterinary bustled in and said: "Good news, Mr. Scott. I've extracted the bullet and, while the wound is deep, I give you my word *Danger* will be as good as ever when it's healed." And he bustled out.

And Mr. Queen, his smile broadening, said: "Well, well, a pretty comedy of errors."

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"Comedy!" growled old John over his daughter's golden curls. "D'ye call a murderous attempt on my life a comedy?" And he glared fiercely at Mr. Hank Halliday, who was at the moment borrowing a handkerchief from the policeman with which to wipe his eyes.

"My dear Mr. Scott," replied Mr. Queen, "there has been no attempt on your life. The shots were not fired at you. From the very first *Danger*, and *Danger* only, was intended to be the victim of the shooting."

"What's this?" cried Paula.

"No, no, Whitey," said Mr. Queen, smiling still more broadly. "The door, I promise you, is well guarded."

The jockey snarled: "Yah, he's off his nut. Next thing you'll say *I* plugged the nag. How could I be on *Danger's* back and at the same time fifty feet away in the grandstand? A million guys saw this screwball fire those shots!"

"A difficulty," replied Mr. Queen, bowing, "I shall be delighted to resolve. *Danger*, ladies and gentlemen, was handicapped officially to carry one hundred and twenty pounds in the Santa Anita Handicap. This means that when his jockey, carrying the gear, stepped upon the scales in the weighing-out ceremony just before the race, the combined weight of jockey and gear had to come to exactly one hundred and twenty pounds; or Mr. Whitey Williams would never have been allowed by the track officials to mount his horse."

"What's that got to do with it?" demanded the chief, eyeing Mr. Whitey Williams in a hard, unfeeling way.

"Everything. For Mr. Williams told us only a few minutes ago that he weighs only a hundred and seven pounds. Consequently the racing saddle *Danger* wore when he was shot must have contained various lead weights which, combined with the weight of the saddle, made up the difference between a hundred and seven pounds, Mr. Williams's weight, and a hundred twenty pounds, the handicap weight. Is that correct?"

"Sure. Anybody knows that."

"Yes, yes, elementary, in Mr. Holmes's imperishable phrase. Nevertheless," continued Mr. Queen, walking over and prodding with his toe the saddle Whitey Williams had fetched to the office, "when I examined this saddle *there were no lead weights in its pockets*. And Mr. Williams assured me no one had tampered with the saddle since he had removed it from *Danger's* back. But this was impossible, since without the lead weights Mr. Williams and the saddle would have weighed out at less than a hundred and twenty pounds on the scales.

"And so I knew," said Mr. Queen, "that Williams had weighed out with a different saddle, that when he was shot *Danger* was wearing a different saddle, that the saddle Williams lugged away from the wounded horse was a different saddle; that he secreted

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it somewhere on the premises and fetched here on our request a *second* saddle — this one on the floor — which he had prepared beforehand with a bullet-hole nicely placed in the proper spot. And the reason he did this was that obviously there was something in that first saddle he didn't want anyone to see. And what could that have been but a special pocket containing an automatic which, in the confusion following Mr. Halliday's first signal shot, Mr. Williams calmly discharged into *Danger's* body by simply stooping over as he struggled with the frightened horse, putting his hand into the pocket, and firing while Mr. Halliday was discharging his three other futile shots fifty feet away? Mr. Halliday, you see, couldn't be trusted to hit *Danger* from such a distance, because Mr. Halliday is a stranger to firearms; he might even hit Mr. Williams instead, if he hit anything. That's why I believe Mr. Halliday was using blank cartridges and threw the automatic away."

The jockey's voice was strident, panicky. "You're crazy! Special saddle. Who ever heard ——"

Mr. Queen, still smiling, went to the door, opened it, and said: "Ah, you've found it, I see. Let's have it. In *Danger's* stall? Clumsy, clumsy."

He returned with a racing saddle; and Whitey cursed and then grew still. Mr. Queen and the police chief and John Scott examined the saddle and, surely enough, there was a special pocket stitched into the flap, above the iron hoop, and in the pocket there was a snub-nosed automatic. And the bullet-hole piercing the special pocket had the scorched speckled appearance of powder-burns.

"But where," muttered the chief, "does Halliday figure? I don't get him a-tall."

"Very few people would," said Mr. Queen, "because Mr. Halliday is, in his modest way, unique among bipeds."

"Huh?"

"Why, he was Whitey's accomplice — weren't you, Hankus?"

Hankus gulped and said: "Yes. I mean no. I mean ——"

"But I'm sure Hank wouldn't —" Katie began to cry.

"You see," said Mr. Queen briskly, "Whitey wanted a setup whereby he would be the last person in California to be suspected of having shot *Danger*. The quarrel between John Scott and Hank gave him a ready-made instrument. If he could make Hank seem to do the shooting, with Hank's obvious motive against Mr. Scott, then nobody would suspect his own part in the affair.

"But to bend Hank to his will he had to have a hold on Hank. What was Mr. Halliday's Achilles heel? Why, his passion for Katie Scott. So last night Whitey's father, Weed Williams, I imagine — wasn't he the jockey you chased from the American turf many years ago, Mr. Scott, and who became a saddle-maker? — kidnaped Katie Scott, and then communicated with Hankus-Pankus and told him just what to do today if he ever expected to see his beloved alive again. And Hankus-Pankus took

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the gun they provided him with, and listened very carefully, and agreed to do everything they told him to do, and promised he would not breathe a word of the truth afterward, even if he had to go to jail for his crime, because if he did, you see, something terrible would happen to the imcomparable Katie."

Mr. Halliday gulped, his Adam's-apple bobbing violently.

"An' all the time this skunk," growled John Scott, glaring at the cowering jockey, "an' his weasel of a father, they sat back an' laughed at a brave mon, because they were havin' their piddling revenge on me, ruining me!" Old John shambled like a bear towards Mr. Halliday. "An' I am a shamed mon today, Hank Halliday. For that was the bravest thing I ever did hear of. An' even if I've lost my chance for the Handicap purse, through no fault of yours, and I'm a ruined maggot, here's my hand."

Mr. Halliday took it absently, meanwhile fumbling with his other hand in his pocket. "By the way," he said, "who did win the Handicap, if I may ask? I was so busy, you see ——"

"*High Tor*," said somebody in the babble.

"Really? Then I must cash this ticket," said Mr. Halliday with a note of faint interest.

"Two thousand dollars!" gasped Paula, goggling at the ticket. "He bet two thousand dollars on *High Tor* at fifty to one!"

"Yes, a little nest-egg my mother left me," said Mr. Halliday. He seemed embarrassed. "I'm sorry, Mr. Scott. You made me angry when you — er — kicked me in the pants, so I didn't bet it on *Danger*. And *High Tor* was such a beautiful name."

"Oh, Hank," sobbed Katie, beginning to strangle him.

"So now, Mr. Scott," said Hankus-Pankus with dignity, "may I marry Katie and set you up in the racing business again?"

"Happy days!" bellowed old John, seizing his future son-in-law in a rib-cracking embrace.

"Happy days," muttered Mr. Queen, seizing Miss Paris and heading her for the nearest bar.

Heigh, *Danger!*

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MIND OVER MATTER

PAULA PARIS found Inspector Richard Queen of the Homicide Squad inconsolable when she arrived in New York. She understood how he felt, for she had flown in from Hollywood expressly to cover the heavyweight fight between Champion Mike Brown and Challenger Jim Coyle, who were signed to box fifteen rounds at the Stadium that night for the championship of the world.

"You poor dear," said Paula. "And how about you, Master Mind? Aren't you disappointed, too, that you can't buy a ticket to the fight?" she asked Mr. Ellery Queen.

"I'm a jinx," said the great man gloomily. "If I went, something catastrophic would be sure to happen. So why should I want to go?"

"I thought witnessing catastrophes was why people *go* to fights."

"Oh, I don't mean anything gentle like a knockout. Something grimmer."

"He's afraid somebody will knock somebody off," said the Inspector.

"Well, doesn't somebody always?" demanded his son.

"Don't pay any attention to him, Paula," said the Inspector impatiently. "Look, you're a newspaperwoman. Can you get me a ticket?"

"You may as well get me one, too," groaned Mr. Queen.

So Miss Paris smiled and telephoned Phil Maguire, the famous sports editor, and spoke so persuasively to Mr. Maguire that he picked them up that evening in his cranky little sports roadster and they all drove uptown to the Stadium together to see the brawl.

"How do you figure the fight, Maguire?" asked Inspector Queen respectfully.

"On this howdedo," said Maguire, "Maguire doesn't care to be quoted."

"Seems to me the champ ought to take this boy Coyle."

Maguire shrugged. "Phil's sour on the champion," laughed Paula. "Phil and Mike Brown haven't been cuddly since Mike won the title."

"Nothing personal, y'understand," said Phil Maguire. "Only, remember Kid Beres? The Cuban boy. This was in the days when Ollie Stearn was finagling Mike Brown into the heavy sugar. So this fight was a fix, see, and Mike knew it was a fix, and the Kid knew it was a fix, and everybody knew it was a fix and that Kid Beres was supposed to lay down in the sixth round. Well, just the same Mike went out there and sloughed into the Kid and half-killed him. Just for the hell of it. The Kid spent a month in the hospital and when he came out he was only half a man." And Maguire smiled his crooked smile and pressed his horn gently at an old man crossing the street. Then he started, and said: "I guess I just don't like the champ."

"Speaking of fixes . . ." began Mr. Queen.

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"Were we?" asked Maguire innocently.

"If it's on the level," predicted Mr. Queen gloomily, "Coyle will murder the champion. Wipe the ring up with him. That big fellow wants the title."

"Oh, sure."

"Damn it," grinned the Inspector, "who's going to win tonight?"

Maguire grinned back. "Well, you know the odds. Three to one on the champ."

When they drove into the parking lot across the street from the Stadium, Maguire grunted: "Speak of the devil." He had backed the little roadster into a space beside a huge twelve-cylinder limousine the color of bright blood.

"Now what's that supposed to mean?" asked Paula Paris.

"This red locomotive next to Lizzie," Maguire chuckled. "It's the champ's. Or rather, it belongs to his manager, Ollie Stearn. Ollie lets Mike use it. Mike's car's gone down the river."

"I thought the champion was wealthy," said Mr. Queen.

"Not any more. All tangled up in litigation. Dozens of judgments wrapped around his ugly ears."

"He ought to be hunk after tonight," said the Inspector wistfully. "Pulling down more than a half a million bucks for his end!"

"He won't collect a red cent of it," said the newspaperman. "His loving wife — you know Ivy, the ex-strip tease doll with the curves and detours? — Ivy and Mike's creditors will grab it all off. Come on."

Mr. Queen assisted Miss Paris from the roadster and tossed his camel's-hair topcoat carelessly into the back seat.

"Don't leave your coat there, Ellery," protested Paula. "Someone's sure to steal it."

"Let 'em. It's an old rag. Don't know what I brought it for, anyway, in this heat."

"Come on, come on," said Phil Maguire eagerly.

From the press section at ringside the stands were one heaving mass of growling humanity. Two bantamweights were fencing in the ring.

"What's the trouble?" demanded Mr. Queen alertly.

"Crowd came out to see heavy artillery, not popguns," explained Maguire. "Take a look at the card."

"Six prelims," muttered Inspector Queen. "And all good boys, too. So what are these muggs beefing about?"

"Bantams, welters, lightweights, and one middleweight bout to wind up."

"So what?"

"So the card's too light. The fans came here to see two big guys slaughter each other. They don't want to be annoyed by a bunch of gnats — even good gnats. . . . Hi, Happy."

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"Who's that?" asked Miss Paris curiously.

"Happy Day," the Inspector answered for Maguire. "Makes his living off bets. One of the biggest plungers in town."

Happy Day was visible a few rows off, an expensive Panama resting on a fold of neck-fat. He had a puffed face the color of cold rice pudding, and his eyes were two raisins. He nodded at Maguire and turned back to watch the ring.

"Normally, Happy's face is like a raw steak," said Maguire. "He's worried about something."

"Perhaps," remarked Mr. Queen darkly, "the gentleman smells a mouse."

Maguire glanced at the great man sidewise, and then smiled. "And there's Mrs. Champ herself. Ivy Brown. Some stuff, hey, men?"

The woman prowled down the aisle on the arm of a weazened, wrinkled little man who chewed nervously on a long green cold cigar. The champion's wife was a full-blown animal with a face like a Florentine cameo. The little man handed her into a seat, bowed elaborately, and hurried off.

"Isn't the little guy Ollie Stearn, Brown's manager?" asked the Inspector.

"Yes," said Maguire. "Notice the act? Ivy and Mike Brown haven't lived together for a couple of years, and Ollie thinks it's lousy publicity. So he pays a lot of attention in public to the champ's wife. What d'ye think of her, Paula? The woman's angle is always refreshing."

"This may sound feline," murmured Miss Paris, "but she's an overdressed harpie with the instincts of a she-wolf who never learned to apply make-up properly. Cheap — very cheap."

"Expensive — very expensive. Mike's wanted a divorce for a long time, but Ivy keeps rolling in the hay — and Mike's made plenty of hay in his time. Say, I gotta go to work."

Maguire bent over his typewriter.

The night deepened, the crowd rumbled, and Mr. Ellery Queen, the celebrated sleuth, felt uncomfortable. Specifically, his six-foot body was taut as a violin-string. It was a familiar but always menacing phenomenon. It meant that there was murder in the air.

The challenger appeared first. He was met by a roar, like the roar of a river at flood-tide bursting its dam.

Miss Paris gasped with admiration. "Isn't he the one!"

Jim Coyle was the one — an almost handsome giant six feet and a half tall, with preposterously broad shoulders, long smooth muscles, and a bronze skin. He rubbed his unshaven cheeks and grinned boyishly at the frantic fans.

His manager, Barney Hawks, followed him into the ring. Hawks was a big man, but

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beside his fighter he appeared puny.

"Hercules in trunks," breathed Miss Paris. "Did you ever see such a body, Ellery!"

"The question more properly is," said Mr. Queen jealously, "can he keep that body off the floor? That's the question, my girl."

"Plenty fast for a big man," said Maguire. "Faster than you'd think, considering all that bulk. Maybe not as fast as Mike Brown, but Jim's got height and reach in his favor, and he's strong as a bull. The way Firpo was."

"Here comes the champ!" exclaimed Inspector Queen.

A large ugly man shuffled down the aisle and vaulted into the ring. His manager — the little weazened, wrinkled man — followed him and stood bouncing up and down on the canvas, still chewing the unlit cigar.

"*Boo-oo-oo!*"

"They're booing the champion!" cried Paula. "Phil, why?"

"Because they hate his guts," smiled Maguire. "They hate his guts because he's an ornery, brutal, crooked slob with the kick of a mule and the soul of a pretzel. That's why, darlin'."

Brown stood six feet two inches, anatomically a gorilla, with a broad hairy chest, long arms, humped shoulders, and large flat feet. His features were smashed, cruel. He paid no attention to the hostile crowd, to his taller, bigger, younger opponent. He seemed detached, indrawn, a subhuman fighting machine.

But Mr. Queen, whose peculiar genius it was to notice minutiae, saw Brown's powerful mandibles working ever so slightly beneath his leathery cheeks.

And again Mr. Queen's body tightened.

When the gong clamored for the start of the third round, the champion's left eye was a purple slit, his lips were cracked and bloody, and his simian chest rose and fell in gasps.

Thirty seconds later he was cornered, a beaten animal, above their heads. They could see the ragged splotches over his kidneys, blooming above his trunks like crimson flowers.

Brown crouched, covering up, protecting his chin. Big Jim Coyle streaked forward. The giant's gloves sank into Brown's body. The champion fell forward and pinioned the long bronze merciless arms.

The referee broke them. Brown grabbed Coyle again. They danced.

The crowd began singing *The Blue Danube*, and the referee stepped between the two fighters again and spoke sharply to Brown.

"The dirty double-crosser," smiled Phil Maguire.

"Who? What d'ye mean?" asked Inspector Queen, puzzled.

"Watch the payoff."

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The champion raised his battered face and lashed out feebly at Coyle with his soggy left glove. The giant laughed and stepped in.

The champion went down.

"Pretty as a picture," said Maguire admiringly.

At the count of nine, with the bay of the crowd in his flattened ears, Mike Brown staggered to his feet. The bulk of Coyle slipped in, shadowy, and pumped twelve solid, lethal gloves into Brown's body. The champion's knees broke. A whistling six-inch uppercut to the point of the jaw sent him toppling to the canvas.

This time he remained there.

"But he made it look kosher," drawled Maguire.

The Stadium howled with glee and the satiation of bloodlust. Paula looked sickish. A few rows away Happy Day jumped up, stared wildly about, and then began shoving through the crowd.

"Happy isn't happy any more," sang Maguire.

The ring was boiling with police, handlers, officials. Jim Coyle was half-drowned in a wave of shouting people; he was laughing like a boy. In the champion's corner Ollie Stearn worked slowly over the twitching torso of the unconscious man.

"Yes, sir," said Phil Maguire, rising and stretching, "that was as pretty a dive as I've seen, brother, and I've seen some beauts in my day."

"See here, Maguire," said Mr. Queen, nettled. "I have eyes, too. What makes you so cocksure Brown just tossed his title away?"

"You may be Einstein on Centre Street," grinned Maguire, "but here you're just another palooka, Mr. Queen."

"Seems to me," argued the Inspector in the bedlam, "Brown took an awful lot of punishment."

"Oh, sure," said Maguire mockingly. "Look, you boobs. Mike Brown has as sweet a right hand as the game has ever seen. Did you notice him use his right on Coyle tonight — even once?"

"Well," admitted Mr. Queen, "no."

"Of course not. Not a single blow. And he had a dozen openings, especially in the second round. And Jimmy Coyle still carries his guard too low. But what did Mike do? Put his deadly right into cold storage, kept jabbing away with that silly left of his — it couldn't put Paula away! — covering up, clinching, and taking one hell of a beating . . . Sure, he made it look good. But your ex-champ took a dive just the same!"

They were helping the gorilla from the ring. He looked surly and tired. A small group followed him, laughing. Little Ollie Stearn kept pushing people aside fretfully. Mr. Queen spied Brown's wife, the curved Ivy, pale and furious, hurrying after them.

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"It appears," sighed Mr. Queen, "that I was in error."

"What?" asked Paula.

"Hmm. Nothing."

"Look," said Maguire. "I've got to see a man about a man, but I'll meet you folks in Coyle's dressing-room and we'll kick a few gongs around. Jim's promised to help a few of the boys warm up some hot spots."

"Oh, I'd love it!" cried Paula. "How do we get in, Phil?"

"What have you got a cop with you for? Show her, Inspector."

Maguire's slight figure slouched off. The great man's scalp prickled suddenly. He frowned and took Paula's arm.

The new champion's dressing-room was full of smoke, people, and din. Young Coyle lay on a training table like Gulliver in Lilliput, being rubbed down. He was answering questions good-humoredly, grinning at cameras, flexing his shoulder-muscles. Barney Hawks was running about with his collar loosened handing out cigars like a new father.

The crowd was so dense it overflowed into the adjoining shower-room. There were empty bottles on the floor and near the shower-room window, pushed into a corner, five men were shooting craps with enormous sobriety.

The Inspector spoke to Barney Hawks, and Coyle's manager introduced them to the champion, who took one look at Paula and said: "Hey, Barney, how about a little privacy?"

"Sure, sure. You're the champ now, Jimmy-boy!"

"Come on, you guys, you got enough pictures to last you a lifetime. What did he say your name is, beautiful? Paris? That's a hell of a name."

"Isn't yours Couzzi?" asked Paula coolly.

"Socko," laughed the boy. "Come on, clear out, guys. This lady and I got some sparring to do. Hey, lay off the liniment, Louie. He didn't hardly touch me."

Coyle slipped off the rubbing table, and Barney Hawks began shooing men out of the shower-room, and finally Coyle grabbed some towels, winked at Paula, and went in, shutting the door. They heard the cheerful hiss of the shower.

Five minutes later Phil Maguire strolled in. He was perspiring and a little wobbly.

"Heil, Hitler," he shouted. "Where's the champ?"

"Here I am," said Coyle, opening the shower-room door and rubbing his bare chest with a towel. There was another towel draped around his loins. "Hya, Phil-boy. Be dressed in a shake. Say, this doll your Mamie? If she ain't, I'm staking out my claim."

"Come on, come on, champ. We got a date with Fifty-second Street."

"Sure! How about you, Barney? You joining us?"

"Go ahead and play," said his manager in a fatherly tone. "Me, I got money

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business with the management." He danced into the shower-room, emerged with a hat and a camel's-hair coat over his arm, kissed his hand affectionately at Coyle, and lumbered out.

"You're not going to stay in here while he dresses?" said Mr. Queen petulantly to Miss Paris. "Come on — you can wait for your hero in the hall."

"Yes, sir," said Miss Paris submissively.

Coyle guffawed. "Don't worry, fella. I ain't going to do you out of nothing. There's plenty of broads."

Mr. Queen piloted Miss Paris firmly from the room. "Let's meet them at the car," he sad in a curt tone.

Miss Paris murmured: "Yes, *sir*."

They walked in silence to the end of the corridor and turned a corner into an alley which led out of the Stadium and into the street. As they walked down the alley Mr. Queen could see through the shower-room window into the dressing-room: Maguire had produced a bottle and he, Coyle, and the Inspector were raising glasses. Coyle in his athletic underwear was — well . . .

Mr. Queen hurried Miss Paris out of the alley and across the street to the parking lot. Cars were slowly driving out. But the big red limousine belonging to Ollie Stearn still stood beside Maguire's roadster.

"Ellery," said Paula softly, "you're such a fool."

"Now, Paula, I don't care to discuss ——"

"What do you think I'm referring to? It's your topcoat, silly. Didn't I warn you someone would steal it?"

Mr. Queen glanced into the roadster. His coat was gone. "Oh, that. I was going to throw it away, anyway. Now look, Paula, if you think for one instant, that I could be jealous of some oversized . . . Paula! What's the matter?"

Paula's cheeks were gray in the brilliant arc-light. She was pointing a shaky forefinger at the blood-red limousine.

"In — in there . . . Isn't that — Mike Brown?"

Mr. Queen glanced quickly into the rear of the limousine. Then he said: "Get into Maguire's car, Paula, and look the other way."

Paula crept into the roadster, shaking.

Ellery opened the rear door of Stearn's car.

Mike Brown tumbled out of the car to his feet, and lay still.

And after a moment the Inspector, Maguire, and Coyle strolled up, chuckling over something Maguire was relating in a thick voice.

Maguire stopped. "Say. Who's that?"

Coyle said abruptly: "Isn't that Mike Brown?"

The Inspector said: "Out of the way, Jim." He knelt beside Ellery.

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And Mr. Queen raised his head. "Yes, it's Mike Brown. Someone's used him for a pin-cushion."

Phil Maguire yelped and ran for a telephone. Paula Paris crawled out of Maguire's roadster and blundered after him, remembering her profession.

"Is he . . . is he —" began Jim Coyle, gulping.

"The long count," said the Inspector grimly. "Say, is that girl gone? Here, help me turn him over."

They turned him over. He lay staring up into the blinding arc-light. He was completely dressed; his fedora was still jammed about his ears and a gray tweed topcoat was wrapped about his body, still buttoned. He had been stabbed ten times in the abdomen and chest, through his topcoat. There had been a great deal of bleeding; his coat was sticky and wet with it.

"Body's warm," said the Inspector. "This happened just a few minutes ago." He rose from the dust and stared unseeingly at the crowd which had gathered.

"Maybe," began the champion, licking his lips, "maybe ——"

"Maybe what, Jim?" asked the Inspector, looking at him.

"Nothing, nothing."

"Why don't you go home? Don't let this spoil your night, kid."

Coyle set his jaw. "I'll stick around."

The Inspector blew a police whistle.

Police came, and Phil Maguire and Paula Paris returned, and Ollie Stearn and others appeared from across the street, and the crowd thickened, and Mr. Ellery Queen crawled into the tonneau of Stearn's car.

The rear of the red limousine was a shambles. Blood stained the mohair cushions, the floor-rug, which was wrinkled and scuffed. A large coat-button with a scrap of fabric still clinging to it lay on one of the cushions, beside a crumpled camel's-hair coat.

Mr. Queen seized the coat. The button had been torn from it. The front of the coat, like the front of the murdered man's coat, was badly bloodstained. But the stains had a pattern. Mr. Queen laid the coat on the seat, front up, and slipped the buttons through the button-holes. Then the bloodstains met. When he unbuttoned the coat and separated the two sides of the coat the stains separated, too, and on the side where the buttons were the blood traced a straight edge an inch outside the line of buttons.

The Inspector poked his head in. "What's that thing?"

"The murderer's coat."

"Let's see that!"

"It won't tell you anything about its wearer. Fairly cheap coat, label's been ripped

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out — no identifying marks. Do you see what must have happened in here, dad?"

"What?"

"The murder occurred, of course, in this car. Either Brown and his killer got into the car simultaneously, or Brown was here first and then his murderer came, or the murderer was skulking in here, waiting for Brown to come. In any event, the murderer wore this coat."

"How do you know that?"

"Because there's every sign of a fierce struggle, so fierce Brown managed to tear off one of the coat-buttons of his assailant's coat. In the course of the struggle Brown was stabbed many times. His blood flowed freely. It got all over not only his own coat but the murderer's as well. From the position of the bloodstains the murderer's coat must have been buttoned at the time of the struggle, which means he wore it."

The Inspector nodded. "Left it behind because he didn't want to be seen in a bloody coat. Ripped out all identifying marks."

From behind the Inspector came Paula's tremulous voice. "Could that be *your* camel's-hair coat, Ellery?"

Mr. Queen looked at her in an odd way. "No, Paula."

"What's this?" demanded the Inspector.

"Ellery left his topcoat behind in Phil's car before the fight," Paula explained. "I told him somebody would steal it, and somebody did. And now there's a camel's-hair coat — in this car."

"It isn't mine," said Mr. Queen patiently. "Mine has certain distinguishing characteristics which don't exist in this one — a cigaret burn at the second buttonhole, a hole in the right pocket."

The Inspector shrugged and went away.

"Then your coat's being stolen has nothing to do with it?" Paula shivered. "Ellery, I could use a cigaret."

Mr. Queen obliged. "On the contrary. The theft of my coat has everything to do with it."

"But I don't understand. You just said ——"

Mr. Queen held a match to Miss Paris's cigaret and stared intently at the body of Mike Brown.

Ollie Stearn's chauffeur, a hard-looking customer, twisted his cap and said: "Mike tells me after the fight he won't need me. Tells me he'll pick me up on the Grand Concourse. Said he'd drive himself."

"Yes?"

"I was kind of — curious. I had a hot dog at the stand there and I — watched. I seen Mike come over and climb into the back ——"

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"Was he alone?" demanded the Inspector.

"Yeah. Just got in and sat there. A couple of drunks come along then and I couldn't see good. Only seemed to me somebody else come over and got into the car after Mike."

"Who? Who was it? Did you see?"

The chauffeur shook his head. "I couldn't see good. I don't know. After a while I thought it ain't my business, so I walks away. But when I heard police sirens I come back."

"The one who came after Mike Brown got in," said Mr. Queen with a certain eagerness. "That person was wearing a coat, eh?"

"I guess so. Yeah."

"You didn't witness anything else that occurred?" persisted Mr. Queen.

"Nope."

"Doesn't matter, really," muttered the great man. "Line's clear. Clear as the sun. Must be that ——"

"What are you mumbling about?" demanded Miss Paris in his ear.

Mr. Queen started. "Was I mumbling?" He shook his head.

Then a man from Headquarters came up with a dudish little fellow with frightened eyes who babbled he didn't know nothing, nothing, he didn't know nothing; and the Inspector said: "Come on, Oetjens. You were heard shooting off your mouth in that gin-mill. What's the dope?"

And the little fellow said shrilly: "I don't want no trouble, no trouble. I only said ——"

"Yes?"

"Mike Brown looked me up this morning," muttered Oetjens, "and he says to me, he says, 'Hymie' he says, 'Happy Day knows you, Happy Day takes a lot of your bets,' he says, 'so go lay fifty grand with Happy on Coyle to win by a K.O.,' Mike says. 'You lay that fifty grand for *me*, get it?' he says. And he says, 'If you shoot your trap off to Happy or anyone else that you bet fifty grand for me on Coyle,' he says, 'I'll rip your heart out and break your hands and give you the thumb,' he says, and a lot more, so I laid the fifty grand on Coyle to win by a K.O. and Happy took the bet at twelve to five, he wouldn't give no more."

Jim Coyle growled: "I'll break your neck, damn you."

"Wait a minute, Jim ——"

"He's saying Brown took a dive!" cried the champion. "I licked Brown fair and square. I beat the hell out of him fair and square!"

"You thought you beat the hell out of him fair and square," muttered Phil Maguire. "But he took a dive, Jim. Didn't I tell you, Inspector? Laying off that right of his ——"

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"It's a lie! Where's my manager? Where's Barney? They ain't going to hold up the purse on this fight!" roared Coyle. "I won it fair — I won the title fair!"

"Take it easy, Jim," said the Inspector. "Everybody knows you were in there leveling tonight. Look here, Hymie, did Brown give you the cash to bet for him?"

"He was busted," Oetjens cringed. "I just laid the bet on the cuff. The payoff don't come till the next day. So I knew it was okay, because with Mike himself betting on Coyle the fight was in the bag ——"

"I'll cripple you, you tinhorn!" yelled young Coyle.

"Take it easy, Jim," soothed Inspector Queen. "So you laid the fifty grand on the cuff, Hymie, and Happy covered the bet at twelve to five, and you knew it would come out all right because Mike was going to take a dive, and then you'd collect a hundred and twenty thousand dollars and give it to Mike, is that it?"

"Yeah, yeah. But that's all, I swear ——"

"When did you see Happy last, Hymie?"

Oetjens looked scared and began to back away. His police escort had to shake him a little. But he shook his head stubbornly.

"Now it couldn't be," asked the Inspector softly, "that somehow Happy got wind that you'd laid that fifty grand not for yourself, but for Mike Brown, could it? It couldn't be that Happy found out it was a dive, or suspected it?" The Inspector said sharply to a detective: "Find Happy Day."

"I'm right here," said a bass voice from the crowd; and the fat gambler waded through and said hotly to Inspector Queen: "So I'm the sucker, hey? I'm supposed to take the rap, hey?"

"Did you know Mike Brown was set to take a dive?"

"No!"

Phil Maguire chuckled.

And little Ollie Stearn, pale as his dead fighter, shouted: "Happy done it, Inspector! He found out, and he waited till after the fight, and when he saw Mike laying down he came out here and gave him the business! That's the way it was!"

"You lousy rat," said the gambler. "How do I know you didn't do it yourself? He wasn't taking no dive you couldn't find out about! Maybe you stuck him up because of that fancy doll of his. Don't tell *me*. I know all about you and that Ivy broad. I know ——"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," said the Inspector with a satisfied smile, when there was a shriek and Ivy Brown elbowed her way through the jam and flung herself on the dead body of her husband for the benefit of the press.

And as the photographers joyously went to work, and Happy Day and Ollie Stearn eyed each other with hate, and the crowd milled around, the Inspector said happily to his son: "Not too tough. Not too tough. A wrap-up. It's Happy Day, all

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right, and all I've got to do is find ——"

The great man smiled and said: "You're riding a dead nag."

"Eh?"

"You're wasting your time."

The Inspector ceased to look happy. "What am I supposed to be doing, then? You tell me. You know it all."

"Of course I do, and of course I shall," said Mr. Queen. "What are you to do? Find my coat."

"Say, what *is* this about your damn' coat?" growled the Inspector.

"Find my coat, and perhaps I'll find your murderer."

It was a peculiar sort of case. First there had been the ride to the Stadium, and the conversation about how Phil Maguire didn't like Mike Brown, and then there was the ringside gossip, the preliminaries, the main event, the champion's knockout, and all the rest of — all unimportant, all stodgy little details . . . until Mr. Queen and Miss Paris strolled across the parking lot and found two things — or rather, lost one thing — Mr. Queen's coat — and found another — Mike Brown's body; and so there was an important murder-case, all nice and shiny.

And immediately the great man began nosing about and muttering about his coat, as if an old and shabby topcoat being stolen could possibly be more important than Mike Brown lying there in the gravel of the parking space full of punctures, like an abandoned tire, and Mike's wife, full of more curves and detours than the Storm King highway, sobbing on his chest and calling upon Heaven and the New York press to witness how dearly she had loved him, poor dead gorilla.

So it appeared that Mike Brown had had a secret rendezvous with someone after the fight, because he had got rid of Ollie Stearn's chauffeur, and the appointment must have been for the interior of Ollie Stearn's red limousine. And whoever he was, he came, and got in with Mike, and there was a struggle, and he stabbed Mike almost a dozen times with something long and sharp, and then fled, leaving his camel's-hair coat behind, because with blood all over its front it would have given him away.

That brought up the matter of the weapon, and everybody began nosing about, including Mr. Queen, because it was a cinch the murderer might have dropped it in his flight. And, sure enough, a radio-car man found it in the dirt under a parked car — a long, evil-looking stiletto with no distinguishing marks whatever and no fingerprints except the fingerprints of the radio-car man. But Mr. Queen persisted in nosing even after that discovery, and finally the Inspector asked him peevishly: "What are you looking for now?"

"My coat," explained Mr. Queen. "Do you see anyone with my coat?"

But there was hardly a man in the crowd with a coat. It was a warm night.

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So finally Mr. Queen gave up his queer search and said: "I don't know what you good people are going to do, but, as for me, I'm going back to the Stadium."

"For heaven's sake, what for?" cried Paula.

"To see if I can find my coat," said Mr. Queen patiently.

"I told you you should have taken it with you!"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Queen. "I'm glad I didn't. I'm glad I left it behind in Maguire's car. I'm glad it was stolen."

"But why, you exasperating idiot?"

"Because now," replied Mr. Queen with a cryptic smile, "I have to go looking for it."

And while the morgue wagon carted Mike Brown's carcass off, Mr. Queen trudged back across the dusty parking lot and into the alley which led to the Stadium dressing-rooms. And the Inspector, with a baffled look, herded everyone — with special loving care and attention for Mr. Happy Day and Mr. Ollie Stearn and Mrs. Ivy Brown — after his son. He didn't know what else to do.

And finally they were assembled in Jim Coyle's dressingroom, and Ivy was weeping into more cameras, and Mr. Queen was glumly contemplating Miss Paris's red straw hat, that looked like a pot, and there was a noise at the door and they saw Barney Hawks, the new champion's manager, standing on the threshold in the company of several officials and promoters.

"What ho," said Barney Hawks with a puzzled glance about. "You still here, champ? What goes on?"

"Plenty goes on," said the champ savagely. "Barney, did you know Brown took a dive tonight?"

"What? What's this?" said Barney Hawks, looking around virtuously. "Who says so, the dirty liar? My boy won that title on the up and up, gentlemen! He beat Brown fair and square."

"Brown threw the fight?" asked one of the men with Hawks, a member of the Boxing Commission. "Is there any evidence of that?"

"The hell with that," said the Inspector politely. "Barney, Mike Brown is dead."

Hawks began to laugh, then he stopped laughing and sputtered: "What's this? What's this? What's the gageroo? Brown dead?"

Jim Coyle waved his huge paw tiredly. "Somebody bumped him off tonight, Barney. In Stearn's car across the street."

"Well, I'm a bum, I'm a bum," breathed his manager, staring. "So Mike got his, hey? Well, well. Tough. Loses his title and his life. Who done it, boys?"

"Maybe you didn't know my boy was dead!" shrilled Ollie Stearn. "Yeah, you put on a swell act, Barney! Maybe you fixed it with Mike so he'd take a dive so your boy

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could win the title! Maybe ——"

"There's been another crime committed here tonight," said a mild voice, and they all looked wonderingly around to find Mr. Ellery Queen advancing toward Mr. Hawks.

"Hey?" said Coyle's manager, staring stupidly at him.

"My coat was stolen."

"Hey?" Hawks kept gaping.

"And, unless my eyes deceive me, as the phrase goes," continued the great man, stopping before Barney Hawks, "I've found it again."

"Hey?"

"On your arm." And Mr. Queen gently removed from Mr. Hawks's arm a shabby camel's-hair topcoat, and unfolded it, and examined it. "Yes. My very own."

Barney Hawks turned green in the silence.

Something sharpened in Mr. Queen's silver eyes, and he bent over the camel's-hair coat again. He spread out the sleeves and examined the armhole seams. They had burst. As had the seam at the back of the coat. He looked up and at Mr. Hawks reproachfully.

"The least you might have done," he said, "is to have returned my property in the same condition in which I left it."

"Your coat?" said Barney Hawks damply. Then he shouted: "What the hell is this? That's my coat! My camel's-hair coat!"

"No," Mr. Queen dissented respectfully, "I can prove this to be mine. You see, it has a telltale cigaret burn at the second buttonhole, and a hole in the right-hand pocket."

"But — I found it where I left it! It was here all the time! I took it out of here after the fight and went up to the office to talk to these gentlemen and I've been —" The manager stopped, and his complexion faded from green to white. "Then where's my coat?" he asked slowly.

"Will you try this on?" asked Mr. Queen with the deference of a clothing salesman, and he took from a detective the bloodstained coat they had found abandoned in Ollie Stearn's car.

Mr. Queen held the coat up before Hawks; and Hawks said thickly: "All right. It's my coat. I guess it's my coat, if you say so. So what?"

"So," replied Mr. Queen, "someone knew Mike Brown was broke, that he owed his shirt, that not even his lion's share of the purse tonight would suffice to pay his debts. Someone persuaded Mike Brown to throw the fight tonight, offering to pay him a large sum of money, I suppose, for taking the dive. That money no one would know about. That money would not have to be turned over to the clutches of Mike Brown's loving wife and creditors. That money would be Mike Brown's own. So Mike Brown

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said yes, realizing that he could make more money, too, by placing a large bet with Happy Day through the medium of Mr. Oetjens. And with this double nest-egg he could jeer at the unfriendly world.

"And probably Brown and his tempter conspired to meet in Stearn's car immediately after the fight for the pay-off, for Brown would be insistent about that. So Brown sent the chauffeur away, and sat in the car, and the tempter came to keep the appointment — armed not with the pay-off money but with a sharp stiletto. And by using the stiletto he saved himself a tidy sum — the sum he'd promised Brown — and also made sure Mike Brown would never be able to tell the wicked story to the wicked world."

Barney Hawks licked his dry lips. "Don't look at me, Mister. You got nothing on Barney Hawks. I don't know nothing about this."

And Mr. Queen said, paying no attention whatever to Mr. Hawks: "A pretty problem, friends. You see, the tempter came to the scene of the crime in a camel's-hair coat, and he had to leave the coat behind because it was bloodstained and would have given him away. Also, in the car next to the murder-car lay, quite defenseless, my own poor camel's-hair coat, its only virtue the fact that it was stained with no man's blood.

"We found a coat abandoned in Stearn's car and my coat, in the next car, stolen. Coincidence? Hardly. The murderer certainly took my coat to replace the coat he was forced to leave behind."

Mr. Queen paused to refresh himself with a cigaret, glancing whimsically at Miss Paris, who was staring at him with a soul-satisfying worship. Mind over matter, thought Mr. Queen, remembering with special satisfaction how Miss Paris had stared at Jim Coyle's muscles. Yes, sir, mind over matter.

"Well?" said Inspector Queen. "Suppose this bird did take your coat? What of it?"

"But that's exactly the point," murmured Mr. Queen. "He took my poor, shabby, worthless coat. Why?"

"Why?" echoed the Inspector blankly.

"Yes why? Everything in this world is activated by a reason. Why did he take my coat?"

"Well, I — I suppose to wear it."

"Very good," applauded Mr. Queen, playing up to Miss Paris. "Precisely. If he took it he had a reason, and since its only function under the circumstances could have been its wearability, so to speak, he took it to wear it." He paused, then murmured: "But why should he want to wear it?"

The Inspector looked angry. "See here, Ellery —" he began.

"No, dad, no," said Mr. Queen gently. "I'm talking with a purpose. There's a point. *The* point. You might say he had to wear it because he'd got blood on his suit *under* the

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coat and required a coat to hide the bloodstained suit. Or mightn't you?"

"Well, sure," said Phil Maguire eagerly. "That's it."

"You may be an Einstein in your sports department, Mr. Maguire, but here you're just a palooka. No," said Mr. Queen, shaking his head sadly, "that's not it. He couldn't possibly have got blood on his suit. The coat shows that at the time he attacked Brown he was wearing it *buttoned*. If the topcoat was buttoned, his suit didn't catch any of Brown's blood."

"He certainly didn't need a coat because of the weather," muttered Inspector Queen.

"True. It's been warm all evening. You see," smiled Mr. Queen, "what a cute little thing it is. He'd left his own coat behind, its labels and other identifying marks taken out, unworried about its being found — otherwise he would have hidden it or thrown it away. Such being the case, you would say he'd simply make his escape in the clothes he was wearing *beneath* the coat. But he didn't. He stole another coat, my coat, for his escape." Mr. Queen coughed gently. "So surely it's obvious that if he stole my coat for his escape, he *needed* my coat for his escape? That if he escaped without my coat he would be *noticed?*"

"I don't get it," said the Inspector. "He'd be noticed? But if he was wearing ordinary clothing ——"

"Then obviously he wouldn't need my coat," nodded Mr. Queen.

"Or — say! If he was wearing a uniform of some kind — say he was a Stadium attendant ——"

"Then still obviously he wouldn't need my coat. A uniform would be a perfect guarantee that he'd pass in the crowds unnoticed." Mr. Queen shook his head. "No, there's only one answer to this problem. I saw it at once, of course." He noted the Inspector's expression and continued hastily: "And that was: If the murderer had been wearing clothes — *any* normal body-covering — beneath the bloodstained coat, he could have made his escape in those clothes. But since he didn't, it can only mean that he *wasn't* wearing clothes, you see, and that's why he needed a coat not only to come to the scene of the crime, but to escape from it as well."

There was another silence, and finally Paula said: "Wasn't wearing clothes? A . . . naked man? Why, that's like something out of Poe!"

"No," smiled Mr. Queen, "merely something out of the Stadium. You see, we had a classification of gentlemen in the vicinity tonight who wore no — or nearly no — clothing. In a word, the gladiators. Or, if you choose, the pugilists. . . . Wait!" he said swiftly. "This is an extraordinary case, chiefly because I solved the hardest part of it almost the instant I knew there was a murder. For the instant I discovered that Brown had been stabbed, and that my coat had been stolen by a murderer who left his own behind, I knew that the murderer could have been *only one of thirteen men*

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. . . the thirteen living prizefighters left after Brown was killed. For you'll recall there were fourteen fighters in the Stadium tonight — twelve distributed among six preliminary bouts, and two in the main bout.

"Which of the thirteen living fighters had killed Brown? That was my problem from the beginning. And so I had to find my coat, because it was the only concrete connection I could discern between the murderer and his crime. And now I've found my coat, and now I know which of the thirteen murdered Brown."

Barney Hawks was speechless, his jaws agape.

"I'm a tall, fairly broad man. In fact, I'm six feet tall," said the great man. "And yet the murderer, in wearing my coat to make his escape, burst its seams at the armholes and back! That meant he was a big man, a much bigger man than I, much bigger and broader."

"Which of the thirteen fighters on the card tonight were bigger and broader than I? Ah, but it's been a very light card — bantamweights, welterweights, lightweights, middleweights! Therefore none of the twelve preliminary fighters could have murdered Brown. Therefore only one fighter was left — a man six and a half feet tall, extremely broad-shouldered and broad-backed, a man who had every motive — the greatest motive — to induce Mike Brown to throw the fight tonight!"

And this time the silence was ghastly with meaning. It was broken by Jim Coyle's lazy laugh. "If you mean me, you must be off your nut. Why, I was in that shower-room taking a shower at the time Mike was bumped off!"

"Yes, I mean you, Mr. Jim Coyle Stiletto-Wielding Couzzi," said Mr. Queen clearly, "and the shower-room was the cleverest part of your scheme. You went into the shower-room in full view of all of us, with towels, shut the door, turned on the shower, slipped a pair of trousers over your bare and manly legs, grabbed Barney Hawks's camel's-hair coat and hat which were hanging on a peg in there, and then ducked out of the shower-room window into the alley. From there it was a matter of seconds to the street and the parking lot across the street. Of course, when you stained Hawks's coat during the commission of your crime, you couldn't risk coming back in it. And you had to have a coat — a buttoned coat — to cover your nakedness for the return trip. So you stole mine, for which I'm very grateful, because otherwise — Grab him, will you? My right isn't very good," said Mr. Queen, employing a dainty and beautiful bit of footwork to escape Coyle's sudden homicidal lunge in his direction.

And while Coyle went down under an avalanche of flailing arms and legs, Mr. Queen murmured apologetically to Miss Paris: "After all, darling, he *is* the heavyweight champion of the world."

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THE DOUBLE TRIANGLE

The Characters

ELLERY QUEEN . . . . . *the detective*
NIKKI PORTER . . . . . *his secretary*
INSPECTOR QUEEN . . . . . *his father*
SERGEANT VELIE . . . . . *of the Inspector's staff*
DR. SAMUEL PROUTY . . . . . *Assistant Medical Examiner*
ORSON BAILEY . . . . . *a young bookkeeper*
MRS. BAILEY . . . . . *his wife*
J. TYLER MONROE . . . . . *an insurance agent*
MRS. MONROE . . . . . *his wife*
DANIEL O'GIGGINS . . . . . *a postman*
CHESTER SMITH . . . . . *a vacuum cleaner salesman*

and RUG PEDDLER, GROCER, LAUNDRYMAN,
DETECTIVES, POLICE, Etc.

The Scene

The Queen Apartment in New York City
— the Bailey House in the North Bronx
— the Monroe Apartment in the Bronx

SCENE 1: *The Queen Apartment*

(NIKKI *is typing rapidly at one of* ELLERY QUEEN'S *manuscripts, reading aloud as she does so.*)

NIKKI: (*Cheerfully*) "Mr. Ellery Queen — thoughtfully examined — a human thigh . . . bone." How that man sleeps nights is beyond me! (*Doorbell rings.* NIKKI *stops typing. The doorbell keeps ringing.*) *All* right, whoever you are! Such impatience! (*She opens the door.*) Yes?

BAILEY: (*He is a young business man, almost hysterical.*) I've got to see Ellery Queen! Let me in!

NIKKI: This way, please. (*The door closes.*) Mr. Queen's busy planning the next chapter of his new mystery novel —

BAILEY: (*Hysterically*) He *must* see me! If someone doesn't help me . . . I won't be responsible! (*Sobbing*) I won't be responsible . . .

NIKKI: Here, this'll never do. (*He keeps sobbing.*) Sit down. (NIKKI *pours him a drink.*) Drink this. (BAILEY *gulps it down.*) There! Feeling better? Now who shall I say is calling, Mr. ———?

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BAILEY: Bailey. Orson Bailey. I'm sorry. Please. Call Mr. Queen. I must — (*The door opens off.*) Here he is now! Mr. Queen! Help me — please!

ELLERY: (*Gravely, as he enters*) Here! What's all this, now?

NIKKI: (*Low*) Name of Orson Bailey, Ellery. Hysterical.

BAILEY: Help me!

ELLERY: (*Gently*) Of course I'll help you, Mr. Bailey. What's the trouble?

BAILEY: Mr. Queen — I'm going to kill a man!

NIKKI: (*Shocked*) And you want Mr. Queen to *help* you? Of all things!

BAILEY: No, no! Mr. Queen, I want you to help me *not* kill a man! Oh, it probably doesn't make sense to you!

ELLERY: You mean you have an urge to kill someone and you want me to protect you against your own homicidal impulse, Mr. Bailey?

BAILEY: That's it! That's it!

ELLERY: Just who is this man you're afraid you'll kill?

BAILEY: (*Despairing*) I don't know.

NIKKI: (*Low*) *I'm* going to call Bellevue Hospital.

ELLERY: Notes, Nikki. Mr. Bailey, tell me your story. I can't help you unless I understand the situation.

BAILEY: A few days ago I found a letter in my wife's bag, a letter she'd written but hadn't mailed yet. It was a — love-letter. A love-letter to another man! (*Fiercely*) "My own darling," Carolyn wrote him — no name! And in the letter my wife asks this — this *mutt* to divorce *his* wife — and then she'd get a divorce from me, and they'd run off and be married!

NIKKI: Uh-uh. I take it all back, Mr. Bailey.

ELLERY: Any notion who this man is, Mr. Bailey?

BAILEY: No! We don't know a soul in New York. I was out of work back home in Cleveland and we moved here a month ago when I was offered a bookkeeping job with a New York hardware firm. We rented a six-room house near the city line. Here's my address. . . . (*He hands* ELLERY *a card.*) Mr. Queen, watch my wife! *Find out who that man is.* Tip the dog off, warn him to get out of my reach . . . because if *I* find out who he is, I'll kill him!

ELLERY: (*Briskly*) What time do you leave for work every morning, Mr. Bailey?

BAILEY: At eight a.m.

ELLERY: Then tomorrow morning follow your usual routine. Meanwhile, don't do or say anything to arouse your wife's suspicions. And leave all the rest to me.

BAILEY: Thanks a thousand times, Mr. Queen. No, don't bother to see me out, Miss. I'm late for work now. (*Fading*) Goodbye — and thanks again!

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(BAILEY *exits quickly, letting himself out.*)

NIKKI: (*Giggling*) Mr. Ellery Queen, World-Famous Detective. Confidential Snooping for Deceived Hubbies. (*With reproach*) Ellery, aren't you *ashamed* to take a case like this?

ELLERY: I don't think you realize just what sort of case it is, Nikki. My intervention may save two men — one from murder, the other from the electric chair!

SCENE 2: *A Residential Street*

(ELLERY *and* NIKKI *are in a parked car, watching a house.* NIKKI *yawns with boredom.*)

NIKKI: If this is the life of a detective — sitting cramped up in a parked car across the street from a dumpy little house for over two hours — I'll take a movie any day. (*A car whizzes by occasionally.*)

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) Not much like the screen, I'll admit, Nikki. . . . Mmmmm. Almost ten o'clock.

NIKKI: I wonder how Sergeant Velie's making out watching the *back* of the house. He must be throwing fits.

ELLERY: Oh, Velie's used to this sort of thing.

NIKKI: Come on, I'll play you a game of "Ghost." You'll win, of course, but then I've got to do *something* to keep from drooling.

ELLERY: (*Laughing*) Suppose you read over those notes you've made since we got here, Nikki.

NIKKI: Shucks. Well, we arrived quarter of eight. Eight o'clock Orson Bailey left house — wife kissed him goodbye at the front door . . . the wench! That's going a little *too* far. Nothing until nine-fifteen, when postman rings front doorbell. Mrs. B opens door. Postman goes into house with her, comes out after five minutes, proceeds to deliver mail to other houses. Nine-thirty. Ford coupé pulls up before Bailey house —

ELLERY: Did you note down the license-number?

NIKKI: *Mr.* Queen! A good secretary notes everything. Sign on coupé door read: "Super Vacuum Cleaner Company." Young salesman carrying vacuum cleaner gets out, rings front-door bell. Door opens from inside. Salesman stays ten minutes, leaves. And that, Mr. Queen, is the hair-raising account of —

ELLERY: (*Quickly*) There's a man going up the walk!

NIKKI: (*Breathlessly*) Start dictating, Ellery.

ELLERY: (*Rapidly as he watches man*) Man carrying black brief-case. Wearing brown felt hat, tan camel's-hair coat with dark stain on back — looks like a burn . . . yes, as if it had been made by a too-hot electric iron.

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The burn is sharply triangular —

NIKKI: (*Lightly*) The long arm of coincidence. Here we're investigating a triangle, and a man with a triangle on his coat comes visiting the gal involved.

ELLERY: Brown suede shoes. Can't see his face. He's rung bell — front door opening from inside — Mr. Camel's-Hair Coat is going in. . . . Got all that, Nikki?

NIKKI: (*Bored*) *Yes*, Mr. Queen. Ah, me! Doomed to sit here all day watching postmen, vacuum cleaner salesmen, and bill collectors going in and out of Mrs. Two Timing Bailey's snug little nest in the North Bronx!

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) Miss Porter, if it takes all of today, and tomorrow, and the next day, and the day after *that*, we'll sit here until we find out who's stolen Orson Bailey's wife!

SCENE 3: *Same, An Hour Later*

(SERGEANT VELIE *lumbers over to the car and gets in wearily.* ELLERY *is alone.*)

ELLERY: 'Lo, Sergeant. I hope you didn't leave your post at the rear door until Nikki got there to relieve you.

VELIE: Naw. Aaaah, this feels swell. I could get higher blood-pressure watchin' a hot game of one-handed solitaire. What's been cookin' out front here, Mr. Queen?

ELLERY: Last visitor came an hour ago — a man in a camel's-hair coat. Stayed ten minutes and then left. What happened at the back door, Sergeant?

VELIE: (*Bored*) Three guys rang the back-door bell this mornin'. First one a rug-peddler, looked Armenian. Second one a boy deliverin' groc'ries. Third one a laundry-man, Mrs. Bailey opened the back door each time with her own lily-white hands.

ELLERY: Did any of the three actually enter the house?

VELIE: Naw. Say, who's this guy comin' towards the car? We better look like a couple o' census-takers!

ELLERY: Relax, Sergeant. Mr. Bailey! What are you doing here? We saw you leave for your office at eight!

BAILEY: (*He is haggard*) I didn't go, Mr. Queen — couldn't. The whole rotten business — it's been on my mind. I phoned my office I was sick, and I've just been wandering around the neighborhood . . . thinking.

VELIE: I'm Sergeant Velie, Mr. Bailey. Say, you look pretty peaked. Don't take this so serious. I once knew a guy — when his wife ran out on him, he threw a party that lasted five days an' nights —

BAILEY: Have you learned anything, Mr. Queen? Have you?

ELLERY: Not much yet. Why don't you . . . (*Urgently*) Duck behind my car,

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Mr. Bailey! *Duck*!

BAILEY: (*Frightened*) Of course. (*He ducks.*) What's the matter?

ELLERY: There's a woman approaching your front door. You mustn't be seen.

VELIE: Ever see that dame before, Mr. Bailey?

BAILEY: (*Peering cautiously*) No. Total stranger. Say, she's ringing our bell!

ELLERY: Mmmm. Still ringing. That's strange — doesn't seem to be any answer.

BAILEY: But — isn't my wife in the house?

VELIE: Course she is! Say, that dame gives up easy, don't she? There she goes, walkin' away from the house.

ELLERY: (*Tensely*) Velie, run after that woman — stop her!

VELIE: Huh? (*He gets out.*) Okay. (*Beginning to run*) Hey, lady! Stop!

ELLERY: Come with me, Mr. Bailey! (*He gets out of the car quickly and they cross the street on the run.*)

BAILEY: (*Panting*) Why didn't Carolyn answer the doorbell?

ELLERY: Something's wrong! (*They run up on the Bailey porch and* ELLERY *rattles the doorknob vigorously.*)

VELIE: (*At the steps*) Here's the dame, Mr. Queen. (*He forces* MRS. MONROE *up the steps.*) Come on, lady. Just be nice, and nothin'll happen to you.

MRS. MONROE: (*She is about 40, a gentlewoman*) I don't understand. Why did you stop me?

ELLERY: Can't explain now, Madam. Mr. Bailey, unlock this door!

BAILEY: (*Breathlessly*) Yes! (*He obeys nervously, and they enter the house.*) Carolyn! Carolyn?

ELLERY: (*Calling*) Mrs. Bailey! (*Pause.*)

VELIE: That's funny. (*He moves off to a room.*) I swear she didn't leave the house. . . .

BAILEY: There's the dining-room. (*He moves off, too.*) Carolyn! Where are you?

VELIE: (*Calling*) Mr. Queen, come 'ere! (*Queerly*) No, lady, you better stay out in the hall —

MRS. MONROE: (*Stepping aside*) Are you all mad? (ELLERY *goes towards* VELIE's *voice.*)

ELLERY: Yes, Sergeant?

VELIE: In here. The livin' room, Mr. Queen.

BAILEY: (*Running up*) What is it? Where's my wife? Why are you blocking me, Sergeant? Get out of my way! (*Pause.* BAILEY *cries out*) Carolyn!

ELLERY: (*Slowly*) Mrs. Bailey . . . shot through the chest.

VELIE: (*Grimly*) Deader'n my great-grandmother. An' no gun.

ELLERY: Murdered. (*Puzzled*) *Murdered* . . .

BAILEY: Carolyn! (*Weakly*) Carolyn . . . (*He sobs in despair.*)

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SCENE 4: *The Bailey House, Later*

(INSPECTOR QUEEN *and his staff are busy.* BAILEY *is babbling hysterically in the background,* NIKKI *soothing him.*)

INSPECTOR: Flint! Hagstrom! Get some order in here! More of a clambake than a murder-investigation! (*A detective calls "Quiet!" and the hubbub subsides a bit.*) Velie! Round up all the people who visited the house this morning since Bailey left at eight?

VELIE: I got 'em all in the hall under guard, Inspector — all except one guy.

ELLERY: Which one is that, Sergeant?

VELIE: Camel's-Hair Coat. Can't locate him.

ELLERY: How about the three men who came to the back door this morning — rug peddler, grocer, laundryman?

INSPECTOR: Nothing there, Ellery. I've questioned 'em and sent them packing. They couldn't be involved — Velie says none of 'em entered the house.

NIKKI: (*Fading on*) That poor fellow Bailey is simply out of his mind. I can't get him quiet.

INSPECTOR: Tough on him. Velie, get that letter-carrier in here.

VELIE: Right. (*He exits.*)

ELLERY: Odd that we didn't hear the shot that killed Mrs. Bailey, Dad.

INSPECTOR: Not so odd. Murderer picked up one of those sofa-cushions and fired the shot *through* the cushion. Muffled the report. (VELIE *and the postman enter.*)

VELIE: Here's the postman, Inspector. Name o' Daniel O'Giggins. Don't be afraid, Irish.

O'GIGGINS: (*He is thoroughly Irish*) O'Giggins afraid? Don't be silly!

INSPECTOR: O'Giggins, you rang Mrs. Bailey's bell this morning to deliver mail. Mrs. Bailey opened the door, and you went *into* this house.

O'GIGGINS: Did I, now? And that's a fact. Foine figger of a female, Mrs. Bailey. Sad case.

INSPECTOR: Never mind how sad it is! O'Giggins, since when do postmen enter private houses?

O'GIGGINS: (*Chuckling*) Now that's a question. But a simple answer, too. The letter I was deliverin' had two cints postage due on it, an' Mrs. Bailey ast me to stip insoide whilst she got her purse. Comprehend?

ELLERY: You were inside this house five minutes, O'Giggins!

O'GIGGINS: An' what is this, may I ask — th' Spanish Inquisition? Sure I was that! Mrs. Bailey, she ast me too if I'd take a letter away with me an' mail it at the post-office. "Yiss, Mrs. B," I says. " 'Twould be a pleasure," I

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says. So up she goes upstairs an' comes down five minutes later with a letter.

NIKKI: I'll bet she *wrote* it in that five minutes!

VELIE: A billy-doo to her boy-friend!

INSPECTOR: Notice who the letter was addressed to, O'Giggins?

O'GIGGINS: An' now O'Giggins is a snoop? I did not!

INSPECTOR: Mrs. Bailey was alive when you left?

O'GIGGINS: An' what else would she be?

ELLERY: O'Giggins, are you a married man?

O'GIGGINS: (*Sadly*) I am, an' then again I am not.

ELLERY: What do you mean?

O'GIGGINS: Me wife — the baggage! — run away with another man — a foireman, he was — two years ago. 'Tis a foine Civil Service we're gittin' to have!

INSPECTOR: That's all, O'Giggins. Let him go, Velie. And get that vacuum cleaner salesman in here.

VELIE: This way out, Irish. (*He takes* O'GIGGINS *to the door.*) Smith! Chester Smith! In here. (SMITH *comes in, and* VELIE *shuts the door.*) Here he is, Inspector. Chester Smith in person, salesman for the Sooper Vacuum Cleaner Comp'ny.

SMITH: (*He is defiant, a young, oily-sharp house-to-house salesman*) Yes, and I want to know what the big idea is! I stop at this house to try and make a sale, and the next thing I know — arrested! Well, I'm not afraid of cops. You've got nothing on *me!*

INSPECTOR: (*Softly*) You're not arrested, Mr. Smith. We just want to question you. You stayed in this house for ten minutes. What were you doing here?

SMITH: What d'ye think I was doing? I was demonstrating my company's vacuum cleaner! The lady — what was her name? Bailey! — Mrs. Bailey said she'd speak to her husband. So I left my card and shoved off. Now lemme go, will you? You're ruining my day!

INSPECTOR: All right, Velie. And bring in that woman — Mrs. Monroe — the woman who rang the bell and started to walk away.

VELIE: Yes, sir. Come on, Smitty. (VELIE *escorts the salesman from the room.*)

NIKKI: How on earth *anyone* could figure out who murdered Mrs. Bailey with so many people coming and going this morning. . . .

ELLERY: Oh, we know who the murderer was, Nikki.

NIKKI: *What?* (VELIE *and* MRS. MONROE *enter.*)

INSPECTOR: (*Chuckling*) Ellery means in a general sort of way, Nikki. Just a minute.

VELIE: Here's Mrs. Monroe, Inspector.

MRS. MONROE: (*Near tears*) Why am I being held this way? It's been hours and hours

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— and I don't know anything about this horrible crime —

INSPECTOR: Just sit down here, Mrs. Monroe. We'll have a chat in a moment. . . . You see, Nikki, this is an open-and-shut case. Twenty minutes after Smith, the vacuum cleaner salesman, left, the man in the camel's-hair coat arrived. You and Ellery *saw* Camel's-Hair admitted to the house. We know the only one *in* the house was Mrs. Bailey. Therefore Mrs. Bailey *must* have been alive when Camel's-Hair came.

ELLERY: Then the man left, Nikki, and during the next hour no one else either came or went. Conclusion: Only one possible murderer — *the last visitor to enter the house before Mrs. Bailey's murder.* And who was that last visitor? The man in the camel's-hair coat!

VELIE: (*Dryly*) But we ain't found him.

INSPECTOR: Hand me that phone, Velie. (VELIE *does so and the* INSPECTOR *dials as he talks*) We've *got* to find him. . . . Headquarters? Inspector Queen. General alarm. . . . Ellery, you've got a complete description of the man from Nikki's notes. Dictate it to Headquarters.

ELLERY: Right, Dad.

INSPECTOR: Joe? Hold on and take this description. Here, son.

NIKKI: Here are my notes, Ellery.

ELLERY: Thanks, Nikki. . . . Hello! Ready? Here goes . . . Man, medium height, tan camel's-hair coat with a singed spot on the back in the shape of a triangle — (MRS. MONROE *cries out and falls to the floor.*) Hold on! Something's happened here! (*They all run over to her.*)

NIKKI: She's fainted! Mrs. Mon*roe* . . . wake up . . . !

VELIE: She ain't sleepin', Miss Porter. Give 'er air.

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) Just one moment. Why did this woman faint when you were describing that camel's-hair coat over the phone, Ellery?

ELLERY: Because she must have recognized the coat from my description. Dad, Mrs. Monroe knows the identity of the man in the camel's-hair coat!

SCENE 5: *Same, a Few Minutes Later*

(MRS. MONROE *is in a chair, weeping hysterically.*)

NIKKI: There, aren't you feeling a little bit better now, Mrs. Monroe? (*Low*) Let her cry, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: She can cry all she wants to — I want information! Madam, you claim you're Mrs. J. Tyler Monroe — that your apartment is about fifteen minutes' walk from the Bailey house — that your husband is an insurance collector — (MRS. MONROE *sobs "Yes," to each.*)

ELLERY: That your husband owns a camel's-hair coat with a three-cornered burn

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on the back — ("*Yes . . .*")

INSPECTOR: Why did you try to see Mrs. Bailey this morning?

MRS. MONROE: (*Crying*) She was breaking up my home! I'd found two letters in my husband's pocket — love-letters from a woman I'd never heard of before — they had her name and address on them — she wrote my husband to divorce me and marry her. . . . (*She breaks down.*)

NIKKI: That's a shame. Some women are like — like wolverines.

INSPECTOR: Mrs. Monroe, what happened after you found Mrs. Bailey's love-letters to your husband?

MRS. MONROE: (*Crying*) I showed him the letters — that was last night. We had a quarrel . . . I was so *humiliated.* How could I stay with him after . . . finding out a thing like that? So I left him! I slept overnight last night at my brother's house in the West Bronx.

ELLERY: What was your maiden name, Mrs. Monroe?

MRS. MONROE: Smith — Laura Smith. This . . . this morning I . . . well, I'd thought things over during the night. I thought if I talked to Mrs. Bailey, pleaded with her — maybe she'd give him up. I came here, but she didn't answer my ring, so I started to walk away when that big Sergeant you just told to go over to my apartment stopped me. . . . Why did you send him?

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) That "big" Sergeant, Madam, has gone to arrest your husband for the murder of Mrs. Orson Bailey. (*She cries*) Sorry — (*The phone rings. He answers it*) Yes?

VELIE: (*On the other end*) Inspector? It's me!

INSPECTOR: (*Low*) Velie! Have you got him?

VELIE: Uh . . . not exactly, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: Don't tell me you let Monroe give you the slip!

VELIE: Now listen, Inspector. I got here, see, and I can't get any answer to my ring, so I pick the lock an' go in an' guess what. . . .

INSPECTOR: (*Snarling*) Do I have to play games? *What?*

VELIE: There's Monroe layin' on the floor with a bullet-hole in his temple an' a gun in his hand . . . dead!

SCENE 6: *The Monroe Apartment*

(VELIE *is holding off* REPORTERS *and* CAMERAMEN.)

VELIE: No, you ain't comin' into the Monroe bedroom! We're waitin' for a ballistics report on the gun found in the dead guy's hand. Now that's all! Stay out here in the livin' room till the Inspector says it's okay. In fact, my friends, I'll stay out here *with* you — to see you don't walk off with a poor

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widder's apartment! (*He slams door.*)

INSPECTOR: Doc Prouty! Aren't you through examining Monroe's body yet? (*The* ASSISTANT MEDICAL EXAMINER *is examining the corpse.*)

PROUTY: I'm just doing this for fun, of course. *Certainly* I'm not finished, Dick Queen! (*Grunt*) *Don't* fight me, Mr. Monroe! Miss Porter, ever know there are corpses that fight back? 'S a fact. Just stubborn, that's all. Won't let you turn 'em over. . . .

NIKKI: (*Faintly*) Please . . . Dr. Prouty . . .

INSPECTOR: Ellery, why don't you take Nikki home? This case is about washed up, anyway.

ELLERY: I'd rather stick around, Dad.

INSPECTOR: Don't see what for. We've already established that Monroe was the man in the camel's-hair coat, and we know Camel's-Hair was the only one who could have shot Mrs. Bailey. Last night, Monroe's wife walked out on him. So the great lover must have had a heart-to-heart talk with himself and decided to see Mrs. Bailey this morning —

NIKKI: If that isn't like a man! I'm sorry, even if he *is* dead. . . . Makes a woman love him, and then, when he sees it's getting serious — so serious she wants him to divorce his wife and marry *her* — he tries to crawl *out.*

INSPECTOR: That's what happened, I'm convinced. Monroe came here today to tell Mrs. Bailey he wouldn't divorce his wife. They quarreled — I can imagine what *she* called him! — and he shot her to death. Left the Bailey house, returned here to his own apartment. But on his walk back home, he realized what committing murder meant. He undressed, put on his dressing-gown and slippers. . . . By the way, Ellery, what did you do with Monroe's camel's-hair coat?

ELLERY: Here it is, Dad, hanging next to the suit he'd been wearing — I hung it back in the bedroom closet, where we found it. No question about it's being the same coat the murderer wore this morning; eh, Nikki?

NIKKI: There's the same triangular burn on the back.

ELLERY: And here's his brown felt hat on the closet shelf, lying brim up. And his suede shoes in this pocket of the shoe-bag on the closet door, where he'd tucked them in, heels out, when he got home and undressed.

INSPECTOR: Yes, it's a clear picture. He got panicky. Sat here alone, sweating, conscience-stricken — then cracked wide open. He picked up the gun he'd shot Mrs. Bailey with, and — (VELIE *enters hurriedly.*)

VELIE: Inspector! The ballistics report just came in from downtown and they say it *was* the same gun used in both deaths — markings from the two bullets check exactly!

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INSPECTOR: That settles it. Monroe murdered Mrs. Bailey and came back here to commit suicide! Pack up, Velie.

ELLERY: One moment, Dad. Your theory covers all the known facts, it's true, but —

INSPECTOR: Never satisfied! What facts *don't* we know?

ELLERY: Well, if Dr. Prouty here says Monroe died *after* Mrs. Bailey did, then your theory of murder-and-suicide is probably right. What's your verdict, Dr. Prouty?

PROUTY: My friends, I have been listening to this brilliant conversation with sadness in my heart — great sorrow. Inspector, you say this man Monroe killed Mrs. Bailey, then returned to his own apartment and committed suicide. *I* say you've got ants in your belfry.

INSPECTOR: Now wait a minute, Prouty, wait a minute —

PROUTY: *You* wait a minute, Dick Queen! I've examined both bodies. And I tell you Monroe *couldn't* have killed Mrs. Bailey — because Monroe was dead *before* she was murdered! (*Chuckles as he leaves*) Ride me, will he? Put that in your pipe and choke on it, you old . . . (DR. PROUTY *exits.*)

INSPECTOR: (*Groaning*) Everything happens to me!

NIKKI: (*Bewildered*) But my brain is buzzing. If Monroe didn't kill Mrs. Bailey, then who did?

VELIE: Miss Porter, that's what we're tryin' to find out.

ELLERY: You can stop trying, Sergeant. . . . Oh, I've been a myopic fool! I should have known.

INSPECTOR: Should have known *what*, Ellery?

ELLERY: That Monroe's "suicide" was too pat — that we were being handed a solution on a very attractive silver platter.

NIKKI: Monroe was murdered, too?

ELLERY: Of course he was! Dad, get a warrant ready — and *I'll tell you what name to write down as the murderer of Mrs. Bailey and Monroe.*

At this point in The Adventure of the Double Triangle ELLERY QUEEN *has indicated that he knows who murdered* MRS. BAILEY *and* J. TYLER MONROE. *Do you? The solution can be reached by facts in your possession plus clear reasoning from them. You can get added enjoyment from* MR. QUEEN'S *little radio playlet by trying to arrive at the correct solution before he explains it.*

SOLUTION

SCENE 7: *Police Headquarters*

ELLERY: Only one person could have killed Mrs. Bailey — the person dressed in

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the camel's-hair coat who called at the Bailey house this morning.

NIKKI: And we assumed that person was Mr. Monroe, because it was Monroe's coat that was worn, and all the other clothes we noticed on the visitor were identified, too.

ELLERY: Yes, but now we know the visitor couldn't have been Monroe, because Monroe was already dead.

VELIE: All right, so the killer of Mrs. Bailey musta been somebody masqueradin' in Monroe's clothes. Where do we go from there?

ELLERY: In the light of this preamble, Dad, suppose you reconstruct for us what the murderer did today.

INSPECTOR: Well, we know he killed two people — Monroe first, Mrs. Bailey second — and both with the same gun. So the murderer went first to the Monroe apartment, where he found Monroe alone this morning — Mrs. Monroe having stayed overnight with her brother — and Monroe'd just waked up, hadn't even dressed yet — was still wearing his dressing-gown and slippers. Murderer shoots Monroe, dresses up in Monroe's clothes, and then goes over to the Bailey house.

NIKKI: Sounds perfect so far.

INSPECTOR: Mrs. Bailey, thinking it was Monroe at first glance, let the murderer in. He followed her into her living-room, picked up a sofa-cushion, and let her have it through the cushion. Then he left the Bailey house and went back to Monroe's apartment to set the stage for Munroe's "suicide."

ELLERY: And what did the murderer actually do to make Monroe's killing look like a suicide?

VELIE: Why, he took off Monroe's clothes and redressed in his own, hung away Monroe's suit an' coat an' hat an' shoes, left the gun in Monroe's hand, and beat it.

NIKKI: The perfect double crime!

ELLERY: Not quite perfect, Nikki. He made one mistake . . . no, two mistakes. The first was caught by Dr. Prouty; the murderer didn't figure that we'd find out Monroe had died first. The second mistake tells us who the murderer is! Consider the motive — in this case a fundamental factor. The murderer planned the killing of two people — Mrs. Bailey and her lover. Therefore, the murderer must have had a motive against *both of them*. But who would want to kill *both* Mrs. Bailey *and* Monroe?

NIKKI: Orson Bailey! Mrs. Bailey's husband!

ELLERY: Yes, as the injured husband in the case, Bailey certainly had motive against his faithless wife and the man who had stolen her from him. The usual domestic triangle. But this case has two triangles, Nikki — or

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rather, a *double* triangle.

NIKKI: That triangular burn on Monroe's coat!

ELLERY: (*Laughing*) No, Nikki — two *domestic* triangles. The two lovers and the injured husband form one of the triangles — and the two lovers and the *injured wife* . . . Mrs. Monroe . . . form the other!

INSPECTOR: (*Slowly*) It's true Mrs. Monroe had as much reason to kill her husband and his paramour as Bailey did — in fact, the *identical* reason.

ELLERY: Exactly, Dad. So we can narrow our murderer-possibilities down to two people: Orson Bailey and Mrs. Monroe. No other person connected with the case could have had a motive against *both* victims.

VELIE: But Mr. Queen, how did that second mistake you said the murderer made show you which one of these two pulled off the twin-kill?

ELLERY: The murderer returned to Monroe's apartment, took off the Monroe clothes, and put them away. Well, how did the murderer put away Monroe's *hat*?

NIKKI: Wait a minute . . . I remember! You said the hat was lying on the closet shelf . . . *brim up!*

ELLERY: And how had the murderer put away Monroe's *shoes*?

INSPECTOR: (*Slowly*) We found them sticking out of the shoe-bag on the closet door . . . *heels out.*

ELLERY: Does a *man* put away his hat brim up — lying on its crown? Does a *man* put away his shoes with the heels out? No! Only a *woman* lays a hat down with the brim up. Only a *woman* deposits her shoes in a shoe-pocket with the heels out. Men's shoes are put in with the heels to the *back* of the pocket . . . they're heavy, and fall out too easily if the heels protrude. So I say — it must have been a *woman* who put away Monroe's clothes after she'd worn them to commit the double murder! And since only two people had motive for that double murder, and one was a man and the other a woman, and now we've deduced that a woman put the clothes away — then obviously it's the woman who's guilty. Not Orson Bailey, but *Mrs. Monroe*, killed the two lovers in the case of the Double Triangle!

(*The music comes up.*)

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THE INVISIBLE CLOCK

The Characters

ELLERY QUEEN . . . . . *the detective*
NIKKI PORTER . . . . . *his secretary*
INSPECTOR QUEEN . . . . . *his father*
SERGEANT VELIE . . . . . *of the Inspector's staff*
GREENLAW . . . . . *young society man*
ENID GREENLAW . . . . . *his wife*
PETEY . . . . . *their one-year-old son*
DR. VAN DYKE . . . . . *a society physician*
MYRTLE VAN DYKE . . . . . *his wife, Enid's sister*
COUNT PHILIP RIBALTA . . . . . *a guest of the Greenlaws'*
COUNTESS MARIE RIBALTA . . . . . *the Count's wife*
DANIEL . . . . . *the Greenlaw butler*
SUZANNE . . . . . *Mrs. Greenlaw's maid*

The Scene

The Queen Apartment — the Long Island Estate
of the Greenlaws

SCENE 1: *The Queen Apartment*

VELIE: You're jumpier 'n Mark Twain's frog, Mr. Greenlaw!

INSPECTOR: Relax, Mr. Greenlaw.

GREENLAW: (*He is a nice young man, very nervous, under great strain.*) Can't, Inspector. Can't sit still. Can't sleep. No appetite —

ELLERY: You sound as if you need a doctor more than a detective, Mr. Greenlaw.

GREENLAW: (*Groaning*) Queen, no doctor can get me out of *this* mess.

INSPECTOR: (*Sharply*) It doesn't concern your child, does it? A one-year-old baby of a millionaire family —

GREENLAW: No, no, it's not little Petey. It's . . . (*Suddenly*) *What was that sound?* (*Pause.*)

NIKKI: (*Startled*) What sound, Mr. Greenlaw?

VELIE: (*Low*) He'll be seein' pink snakes next.

ELLERY: (*Gently*) There was no sound, Mr. Greenlaw.

GREENLAW: Nerves. Shot to pieces. Hearing things! (*Laughs bitterly.*) They'll be putting me under observation. . . . Look! My wife has made up a party for tonight — at the Hotel Balboa. . . .

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NIKKI: That's where they're holding that society Relief Ball.

GREENLAW: Yes, Miss Porter. Well — Enid — that's my wife — insists on wearing the Khaaba Ruby, and —

VELIE: Khaaba Ruby! Inspector, ain't that the red ice we hadda guard when it was brought into the States a few years back to be sold?

INSPECTOR: Yes, Velie. So *you* were the one who bought it, Mr. Greenlaw. Half a million, wasn't it?

GREENLAW: Yes. My wedding gift to Mrs. Greenlaw.

NIKKI: Isn't she *lucky!* I saw the Khaaba Ruby when it was on display. The most gorgeous thing — big as an egg — a shiny, blood-red egg. . . . Yum-yum.

ELLERY: And your wife insists on wearing this valuable gem to a society Relief Ball tonight, Mr. Greenlaw?

GREENLAW: I've pleaded with her not to —

VELIE: Scared some Light-Finger Louie'll get ambitious, huh?

GREENLAW: Yes, Sergeant! But Enid — she's stubborn —

ELLERY: Isn't the Khaaba Ruby insured?

GREENLAW: Of course. Course it is.

INSPECTOR: Then what are you afraid of?

GREENLAW: (*Desperately*) Inspector Queen . . . my wife thinks the Khaaba Ruby is in my bank vault. She hasn't worn it for a year. But — well — I'm over my head in debt — my fortune's gone — bad investments — I haven't wanted to worry Enid —

ELLERY: Are you trying to tell us, Mr. Greenlaw, that you don't own the Khaaba Ruby any more?

GREENLAW: I put the ruby necklace up as collateral for a bank loan. And now I haven't the money to redeem it. . . .

VELIE: How about gettin' the bank to let you have it for one night, Mr. Greenlaw? Then your wife still won't know —

GREENLAW: I *can* borrow it on bond, Sergeant. But suppose Enid lost it — or it were stolen. It's not the loss so much — I'm in so deep now another half-million won't make much difference. . . . But the whole story of my finances would come out! And then the social disgrace — and what would Enid say — think — I couldn't face that.

ELLERY: Who'll be in your wife's Ball party tonight?

GREENLAW: My wife's sister Myrtle and her husband, Dr. Van Dyke.

INSPECTOR: The big society doctor, eh?

GREENLAW: Yes. Also Count and Countess Ribalta —

ELLERY: Ribalta. . . . Just who are they?

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GREENLAW: European expatriates, Queen. Some branch of a royal family. Fled the old country years ago and rented an estate on Long Island. Then they decided to return to Europe and I took over their lease — that's how Enid and I met them originally. Now they're back and staying with us as our house-guests. Lovely people. Democratic —

NIKKI: (*Dryly*) That's nice of them.

INSPECTOR: You borrow that ruby from the bank right away, Mr. Greenlaw. My son will watch it for you.

ELLERY: Miss Porter and I will join your wife's party and attend the Ball tonight as your "guests".

GREENLAW: (*Huskily*) I can't tell you how. . . . Thanks, Queen, I'll tell Enid you're friends of mine. Got to dash back to the Street. (*He gets up to leave.*) Thanks again — I'll be expecting you and Miss Porter for dinner. 'Bye.

NIKKI: (*Going with him*) I'll see you to the door, Mr. Greenlaw.

ELLERY: (*Low*) Dad. (INSPECTOR: "Yes, son.") Just as a precaution, why not check up on the Count and Countess Ribalta? — immediately! I want to know if their title is hereditary . . . or *improvised.*

SCENE 2: *An Estate on Long Island*

(*Three people are climbing a magnificent staircase.*)

ENID GREENLAW: (*She is a fluttery young matron*) I'm so *frightfully* perturbed about your headache, Countess.

COUNTESS: (*A typical European of great poise and charm*) So stupid of me, Mrs. Greenlaw. To spoil your lovely dinner —

ENID: (*Distressed*) That's nothing. Can't I do anything —

COUNTESS: (*Panting a bit*) No, no, Mrs. Greenlaw. I have caused you enough embarrassment. (ENID's *protest*) Philip — your arm — this staircase — I'm fatigued —

COUNT: (*He is a courtly man*) Marie, my dear. . . . (*They reach the landing.*) Go slowly — lean on my arm — Please rejoin your other guests, Mrs. Greenlaw — (*They walk down the upper hall.*)

ENID: I'll call my party off, of course, Countess.

COUNTESS: No, no, no! I will not have it, Mrs. Greenlaw! I shall lie down, Philip will stroke my temples . . . in an hour I shall be well again. (*Slight groan.*)

COUNT: (*Anxiously*) We're almost to our suite, Marie. Mrs. Greenlaw — I think you had better leave us —

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ENID: (*Anxiously*) Of course, Count. (*Leaving them*) If you should want anything, please don't hesitate to . . .

COUNT: You're very kind. (*He opens the door to their suite.*) Lean on me, darling. (COUNTESS RIBALTA *responds faintly*) There — slowly — (*He closes the door. Instantly both are sharp and intense.*) Marie. That was clever.

COUNTESS: Make sure the door is locked, fool! (*He tries the door.*) That silly woman — so persistent — I thought she would never leave us!

COUNT: Marie, why did you pretend to be ill?

COUNTESS: (*Contemptuously*) Philip, you're blind! Didn't you notice that man — what's his impossible name? —

COUNT: Mrs. Greenlaw's brother-in-law, Dr. Van Dyke?

COUNTESS: No, no, not that gruff boor! The other male guest — the escort of that red-headed girl . . . Queen! That's it.

COUNT: Ellery Queen? A charming young man, I thought —

COUNTESS: Dangerous! Didn't you notice his eyes? Philip, he watched us from the instant he and the Porter girl arrived!

COUNT: I'm afraid I paid more attention to the girl. (*Softly*) Very dainty morsel, that Miss Porter. . . .

COUNTESS: Imbecile! They're detectives!

COUNT: (*Dismayed*) Detectives!

COUNTESS: I'm sure of it! Philip . . . *we must be careful! We're being watched!*

SCENE 3: *The Same, Later*

(*A group in the lower foyer.*)

ENID: (*Fussily*) I hope the baby's sleeping. Is the car ready? Do I look all right? Are we all here? Oh, dear, we'll be late for the Ball!

GREENLAW: Now Enid, we shan't be late at all.

ELLERY: Where are the Count and Countess Ribalta, Mrs. Greenlaw?

ENID: Oh, dear, the Countess's headache. . . . Darling, did they say anything to you about joining us?

GREENLAW: We're to go ahead and the Count and Countess will meet us at the Ball.

NIKKI: Isn't it odd that the Countess didn't want any relief — with a famous doctor in the house?

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) Doesn't the Countess Ribalta like you, Dr. Van Dyke?

VAN DYKE: (*A bass-voiced fat man*) If that skinny female has a headache, Queen, I'll quit practising medicine. Where's my wife, hang it?

ENID: But Van — the Countess is delicate and high-strung. After *all* — royalty —

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VAN DYKE: (*Snorting*) She's no more neurotic than I am, Enid! (*Roaring*) Myrtle! Do you realize you're holding everybody up? We're waiting down here in the foyer!

MYRTLE: (*From the stairs — she is a mousy type*) Coming, Doctor! (*Appearing*) I'm *so* sorry. A seam opened in my gown — I had to fix it. Enid, forgive me.

ENID: (*Peevishly*) Oh, that's all right, Myrtle. I wonder if the baby's tucked in upstairs — he's *such* a restless love —

NIKKI: (*Laughing*) The way he kicks his blankets!

GREENLAW: Going to be a football player! Well, well, let's get started —

VAN DYKE: Wait a minute. Myrtle, are you going to the Ball in *that?*

MYRTLE: (*Timidly*) In what, Doctor?

VAN DYKE: And *don't* call me Doctor! My own wife! . . . In what? In that hideous rag you're wearing!

MYRTLE: (*Faltering*) But dearest — I just bought this gown — it's the smartest thing — everybody says so. . . .

VAN DYKE: I don't care a hoot *what* everybody says — it's awful. Go upstairs and change it.

MYRTLE: (*Low*) Yes, dear. (*She leaves.*) I shan't be a minute — excuse me, everybody. . . .

VAN DYKE: I'll go up with you and make sure you don't put on a burlap bag. (*He follows.*) Myrtle! Wait for me, I said.

MYRTLE: (*Off*) Yes, dear. (*Their ad libs fade.*)

NIKKI: (*Low*) What a horrible man *he* is, Ellery.

ELLERY: (*Dryly*) Two hundred and fifty pounds of boorishness. Think I'll trot outside and sniff your garden after the rain, Mr. Greenlaw. Coming, Nikki?

NIKKI: I'll wait here in the foyer, Ellery. It's chilly out.

ELLERY: Right. (*He goes to the front door.*) See you all in the car. . . . (*Exit.*)

ENID: Miss Porter, I'm *humiliated.* Please forgive my sister's husband. Dr. Van Dyke isn't nearly as bad as . . .

NIKKI: Please, Mrs. Greenlaw. I assure you —

GREENLAW: Enid! Where's the Khaaba Ruby?

ENID: (*Startled*) The ruby necklace? I've got it on — (*Shriek*) It's gone! My ruby necklace — stolen!

GREENLAW: (*Hoarsely*) Enid, for pity's sake — think! Are you sure you put it on? Where did you —

ENID: (*Weeping*) But I *know* I did! Oh, dear, now I can't remember —

NIKKI: (*Laughing*) You haven't lost the ruby necklace! Don't you remember,

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Mrs. Greenlaw? When you showed us your baby upstairs in the nursery a few minutes ago, you took the necklace off?

ENID: I did? Darling — Miss Porter's right! I *did!*

GREENLAW: Whew! Where'd you put it, Enid?

ENID: Now where *did* I put it? Let me *think.*

NIKKI: You *are* absent-minded, Mrs. Greenlaw. I saw you lay it down on the baby's night-table, between the clock and that little table radio.

ENID: I'm *such* a goose! Darling — Miss Porter — wait here for me. I'll run upstairs and fetch it. (*She runs off.*) I'll be right down. . . .

GREENLAW: For a minute there I really thought that — (*Sharply*) Miss Porter! Do you hear . . . *voices?*

NIKKI: Voices! (*Shakily*) Now Mr. Greenlaw — you said yourself you're always hearing things —

GREENLAW: No! Listen! (*Pause. There is a faint murmur of voices.*) Don't you hear them? It's coming from that open transom! (*Low*) Come with me, Miss Porter! No noise!

NIKKI: I do hear them! (*Low*) Doesn't the door with the transom lead to the dining room, Mr. Greenlaw?

GREENLAW: Yes! Quiet! (*They hear* SUZANNE's *tinkly laugh clearly now*).

SUZANNE: (*She is a petite French maid*) Daniel — for a butler you are *so* romantic. (*Laughs as if in playful struggle*) Daniel! Let me go!

DANIEL: (*An English butler. Passionately*) Suzanne — you know how utterly mad I am about you. . . . Let me take you in my arms, Suzanne. (*They continue their love-making as* NIKKI *speaks.*)

NIKKI: (*Giggling*) You *did* give me a start, Mr. Greenlaw. That's only your butler and the baby's nursemaid having an ordinary backstairs romance —

GREENLAW: (*Fiercely*) How do I know? That French maid is clever, and the butler has a funny look in his eye . . . Shh! They may be planning something — (*The voices come up again.*)

DANIEL: But I want to marry you, Suzanne —

SUZANNE: (*Merrily*) Marry me! Daniel — you are cra-zee.

DANIEL: (*Humbly*) I'm in love with you, Suzanne. I can't offer you much, but we both have good situations — I've put a few farthings aside, you know — perhaps we can buy a cottage in the country —.

SUZANNE: Daniel! I do think you are serious!

DANIEL: (*Huffily*) Serious? I'm asking you to be my wife, Suzanne!

SUZANNE: But Daniel — what shall I say? I never knew — (*The murmur of their talk fades off as if they walked out of range.*)

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GREENLAW: I wonder if they're play-acting. It might be —!

NIKKI: (*Humoring him*) Mr. Greenlaw, aren't you ashamed of yourself? (*Brightly*) Where's Mrs. Greenlaw all this time? I think we ought to go upstairs and see what's happened to her —

GREENLAW: (*Muttering*) Yes. She's taking a long time. . . . (ENID *screams piercingly from above.*) Who's that screaming?

NIKKI: It's your wife, Mr. Greenlaw! (*They run to the stairs. The screams persist.*)

GREENLAW: (*Shouting*) Enid! It *is* Enid!

NIKKI: She sounds — awful! (*They run upstairs.*)

GREENLAW: It's coming from upstairs! Enid! ENID! (*Her cries grow louder.*) Where are you, Enid? (*They reach the landing.*)

ENID: (*Muffled*) Help! Help!

NIKKI: She's in the baby's bedroom, Mr. Greenlaw! (*They run toward the nursery. The* RIBALTAS' *door opens.*)

COUNT: (*Appearing*) Who is screaming?

COUNTESS: (*Off*) What has happened? Philip, I shall swoon!

GREENLAW: (*Shouting*) I'm coming, Enid! (*The* VAN DYKES' *door opens.*)

VAN DYKE: (*Appearing*) Greenlaw! What's that infernal yowling?

MYRTLE: (*Off*) It's my sister Enid! Something's happened to Enid! (GREENLAW *flings open the nursery door. The baby is crying faintly.* ENID *is still screaming.*)

GREENLAW: Enid, darling . . .

NIKKI: She's lying on the floor! Mrs. Greenlaw!

ENID: (*Sobbing*) I was attacked! The ruby — the Khaaba Ruby — it *has* been stolen!

SCENE 4: *The Same, Later*

(ENID *is crying in the background, and* NIKKI *and* GREENLAW *are soothing her.*)

ELLERY: (*Into a telephone*) Yes, Dad. I've sent the Ribaltas, the servants, and the Van Dykes to their rooms.

INSPECTOR QUEEN'S VOICE: Keep 'em there, Ellery. Velie and I will be there as fast as we can.

ELLERY: Right, Dad. I'll hold down the fort. (*He hangs up.*) How is Mrs. Greenlaw feeling now, Nikki?

NIKKI: A little calmer since Dr. Van Dyke gave her that sedative. There, dear . . . don't cry any more. . . .

GREENLAW: (*Distracted*) For heaven's sake, Enid! How did you permit a thing like this to happen?

ENID: (*Sobbing*) I couldn't help it, darling. When I ran upstairs to get the

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necklace, I opened the nursery door — there was only a dim night-light on. . . . The minute I stepped inside the nursery to get the ruby, someone threw a blanket over my head and at the same time my legs were grabbed and I fell down. . . . I remember trying to scream, but then everything went black.

ELLERY: You fainted, Mrs. Greenlaw? For how long?

ENID: (*Crying*) Just a few seconds, I think, Mr. Queen. Then I came to and began fighting to free myself of the blanket and screaming my s-silly head off. I freed myself, but whoever it was — was gone! With the ruby.

NIKKI: That's when Mr. Greenlaw and I must have run in.

ELLERY: So in the dim light and with a blanket over your head, you didn't see who attacked you, Mrs. Greenlaw?

ENID: (*Sobbing*) No, Mr. Queen. My poor head — (*Alarmed*) How's little Petey? Did anything happen to my baby? He was asleep when it happened, but when I screamed he woke up and began to cry —

NIKKI: The baby's fast asleep again, Mrs. Greenlaw. (*She leads her aside.*) Why don't you lie down? Mr. Queen will find your —

GREENLAW: (*Low, tense*) Queen. Come out with me into the hall!

ELLERY: Yes, Greenlaw. (ELLERY *and* GREENLAW *go out into the hall.*)

GREENLAW: (*Desperately*) Queen, you've got to find that ruby tonight! If you don't, the whole story of my shaky finances will come out — I'll be ruined — Enid will find out I practically pawned my wedding gift to her. . . . (*Breaks down*) Please, Queen. . . .

ELLERY: I'll find your wife's ruby, Greenlaw — it's a promise.

SCENE 5: *The Same, Later*

(VELIE *enters.*)

INSPECTOR QUEEN: Well, Velie?

SERGEANT VELIE: There's no footprints anywhere around the house except Mr. Queen's.

INSPECTOR: And you made those, Ellery, when you left Mr. and Mrs. Greenlaw in the foyer with Nikki to go out and wait for them in the car?

ELLERY: That's right, Dad.

NIKKI: I can't imagine who stole that ruby!

INSPECTOR: (*Dryly*) I can, Nikki . . . Now, son, you were waiting outside in the car, so you had the front under observation. Also the windows of the nursery, which face the front of the house.

VELIE: Besides, all the other doors were locked from the inside, and nobody

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coulda left the house by a winda — or we'd 'a' found footprints in the rain-soaked ground *under* a winda.

INSPECTOR: So it's an inside job.

VELIE: Nobody's left the house, so the ruby's still here some place. Let's start searchin'.

NIKKI: *This* house, Sergeant? There are hundreds of places here where a necklace could be hidden.

INSPECTOR: Yes, it would take a week to give the place a first-class going-over.

ELLERY: Besides, all these people are familiar with the Greenlaw house, Dad. The Count and Countess Ribalta actually lived here before Greenlaw took over their lease —

NIKKI: Yes, and Dr. and Mrs. Van Dyke visit all the time — Mrs. Greenlaw said so.

VELIE: And of course the hired help would know the joint inside out.

INSPECTOR: Velie — get that maid and butler in here!

VELIE: (*Wearily*) We're off. (*He opens a door.*) Hey, Jeeves! Cutey! Come 'ere! Yeah, I mean you — the butler an' the nursemaid. (*He closes the door.*) Inside, inside.

SUZANNE: (*Nervously*) We do nozzing. We know nozzing. . . .

DANIEL: (*Nervously*) Inspector Queen, I assure you —

INSPECTOR: Just answer my questions. Where were you two when the ruby was stolen from the nursery upstairs?

SUZANNE: M'sieu', we were downstairs in ze dining room all ze time —

DANIEL: That's the truth, sir.

VELIE: What were you doin' downstairs?

DANIEL: (*Coughing*) Why . . . ah . . . I was rummaging up after dinner, Sergeant . . . a few ordin'ry chores. . . .

SUZANNE: An' I — I was conversing wiz Daniel.

INSPECTOR: All right. I'll talk to you two again, later. Take 'em out, Velie, and bring in those Van Dykes!

VELIE: Anchors a-weigh, folks. (VELIE *escorts the* SERVANTS *to the door and calls* DR. *and* MRS. VAN DYKE.)

NIKKI: (*While waiting*) They're telling the truth, Inspector. Mr. Greenlaw and I overheard them. Daniel was making love to her.

INSPECTOR: It's a free country. . . . Ah! Dr. and Mrs. Van Dyke. (*The* VAN DYKES *enter with* SERGEANT VELIE.) Where were *you* during the theft?

MYRTLE: We were in our room upstairs, Inspector. I was changing my gown —

VAN DYKE: (*Curtly*) Keep quiet, Myrtle. Inspector, do I understand that Mrs. Van Dyke and I are suspected of stealing my wife's sister's necklace?

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INSPECTOR: (*Dryly*) Did you, Doctor?

VAN DYKE: Certainly not! My wife and I were both in our room —

INSPECTOR: Dr. Van Dyke, you're one of those high-class society physicians who charge enormous fees for keeping foolish women neurotic. However, for all your lucrative racket, I've checked you — and you're up to your ears in debt. You've been supporting every gambling joint in town.

VELIE: Et ceterah!

MYRTLE: I didn't know that! So *that's* why you've been so worried at home lately, Doctor —

VAN DYKE: (*Venomously*) Shut — up, you . . . amoeba!

NIKKI: *Such* a devoted husband!

INSPECTOR: Outside. Velie — the Count and Countess.

VELIE: Do I kiss their hands, or what? This way, Doc . . . Mrs. Doc . . . (VELIE *escorts the* VAN DYKES *out, and summons the* COUNT *and* COUNTESS.)

ELLERY: What did your check-up of the Count and Countess Ribalta reveal, Dad?

INSPECTOR: Just a minute, Ellery. (*Softly*) Count — Countess — come in, please. (*The* RIBALTAS *enter.*)

COUNTESS: Philip — my head — I cannot stand a stupid inquisition. . . .

COUNT: (*Tenderly*) Of course not, my dear. (*With contempt*) You will please permit the Countess and me to leave at once!

INSPECTOR: What's your hurry, Count? Explain your movements during the theft first.

COUNT: (*Furiously*) You ask *me*, Count Ribalta —

COUNTESS: (*Quickly*) Do as the creature says, Philip. They are very brutal, these American mercenaries

COUNT: (*Coldly*) Very well. The Countess and I were in our suite upstairs. The Countess was ill. I was attending her. We heard Mrs. Greenlaw scream and ran out.

INSPECTOR: Mmm. Nothing else to tell us, Count?

COUNT: Merely that you are an insufferable little bourgeois!

VELIE: An' *you're* a phony Count!

COUNTESS: (*Gasping*) Philip! Will you be *insulted* —?

INSPECTOR: Madam, you're no more a Countess than this sidekick of yours is a Count. You were both thrown out of your native country by the police. (*Their gasps.*) Velie, take these two deadbeats outside — and hold on to your watch!

VELIE: (*Grimly*) Get goin', Your Lownesses. Come on, come on! (*He shows them*

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out.) Where do we go from here, Mr. Queen?

ELLERY: Nowhere, it seems. They all have mutual alibis — even Nikki and Greenlaw.

INSPECTOR: Unless we can crack one of those alibis, blast 'em. . . .

NIKKI: Wait! I just remembered! I *knew* there was something I'd forgotten!

ELLERY: (*Eagerly*) What was it, Nikki?

NIKKI: While Mr. Greenlaw and I were eavesdropping in the foyer outside the dining room, I heard a *sound.* It kept going all the time. . . .

VELIE: Now *you're* hearin' things, Miss Porter?

INSPECTOR: (*Sharply*) What kind of sound, Nikki?

NIKKI: The sound of a clock — a clock ticking.

ELLERY: (*Slowly*) A clock ticking. . . .

VELIE: But there ain't no clock in the downstairs foyer.

INSPECTOR: So the ticking sound must have come from the dining room. But what of it? What's so unusual about hearing the tick of a clock, Nikki?

NIKKI: *I* don't know, Inspector. I just mentioned it because Ellery always says to remember every detail —

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) Nikki, you're wonderful! Pupil surpassing her teacher! Dad — you come into Mr. Greenlaw's dining room with me, and I'll *show* you what's unusual about Nikki's clock.

SCENE 6: *The Same, Immediately After*

VELIE: Here's the dinin' room —

NIKKI: But where's the clock?

INSPECTOR: There's no clock in here? There *must* be!

VELIE: Well, there ain't. (ELLERY *chuckles.*)

INSPECTOR: I don't see anything to get gay about, Ellery. Mr. Greenlaw! Where's Mr. Greenlaw?

GREENLAW: (*Entering*) Here, Inspector Queen.

INSPECTOR: Mr. Greenlaw, where's the clock that's usually in this dining room?

GREENLAW: (*Puzzled*) Clock? There's never been a clock in this room, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: (*Irritated*) Nikki, are you sure you heard a *clock?*

NIKKI: I know what a clock sounds like, Inspector!

GREENLAW: I heard it, too, Inspector. It was a clock, all right.

ELLERY: The Invisible Clock, eh? (*Chuckles again.*)

NIKKI: But who put it in the dining room and took it out again? And where is it now?

VELIE: *I* wanna know what it means!

INSPECTOR: It's a clue, all right — but a clue to what?

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ELLERY: (*Grimly*) To who stole the Khaaba Ruby, Dad!

So now ELLERY QUEEN *knows who stole* ENID GREENLAW'S *Khaaba ruby. Do you? The clues are clear; you need only spot them and put them together to draw the one and only logical conclusion. Get added pleasure out of these radio-mystery problems of* ELLERY QUEEN'S *by stopping here and trying to solve "The Adventure of the Invisible Clock" before* MR. QUEEN *gives you the correct solution.*

SOLUTION

SCENE 7: *The Same, Immediately After*

ELLERY: When Mrs. Greenlaw was attacked in the nursery, two things happened *simultaneously* — a blanket was thrown over her head, *and* her legs were grabbed. Obviously no single person could have done *both* those things *at the same time.* Conclusion: Mrs. Greenlaw was attacked by *two* people — *two* thieves — accomplices in the theft of the ruby.

VELIE: Well, how d'ye like that? An' I missed it!

ELLERY: Now consider the alibis of our suspects. They came in *pairs.* The Van Dyke couple alibied *each other* — the butler and maid alibied *each other* — the Ribaltas alibied *each other* — even Greenlaw and Nikki alibied each other.

NIKKI: I like that! Don't you believe *me,* Ellery?

ELLERY: (*Laughing*) Of course, Nikki. But one of the other mutual alibis must be *false,* since those six are the only possibilities. One of the couples is lying — and instead of being where they said they were, they were actually in the baby's nursery attacking Mrs. Greenlaw and stealing her ruby necklace from the night-table.

INSPECTOR: The question is: *Which* alibi is false?

ELLERY: Let's see. The servants. The butler and nursemaid were overheard in the dining-room downstairs by Greenlaw and you, Nikki. But you heard *more than their voices.* You also heard the ticking of a clock — and there *is* no clock, and *never has been* a clock, in the dining room.

INSPECTOR: That's what stymies *me,* Ellery — that clock!

ELLERY: Well, look, Dad. If Nikki could have heard the sound of a *clock* that was *not* in the dining room, then she could also have heard the voices of two *people* who were not in the dining room! And if the maid and butler were *not* in the dining room, *we've broken down their alibi.*

VELIE: You mean the butler an' Suzanne were in the nursery?

NIKKI: When Mr. Greenlaw and I heard their voices downstairs, they were really talking *in the nursery upstairs?*

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INSPECTOR: But Ellery, how could their voices in the nursery be heard coming out of the dining room a floor below?

ELLERY: There *is* a way, Dad! Nikki, where did you say Mrs. Greenlaw had put down her necklace?

NIKKI: In the nursery on the night-table, between the table-radio and the clock. . . . Oh, my . . . the *clock!*

ELLERY: Yes — *that places a clock in the nursery.* And what about the "table radio"? Was it really a radio? Did you ever hear of a radio in the nursery of a *one-year-old infant?*

NIKKI: Course not — I didn't think. Then it must be something that just *looks* like a small radio.

ELLERY: Exactly. And what "looks like" a small radio that would be found in the bedroom of a wealthy baby? Only one thing — *a radio nurse.*

VELIE: What's a "radio nurse," for the love o' Mike?

INSPECTOR: A radio nurse, you cluck, is a gadget that broadcasts sounds coming from a nursery — like a baby crying. Everybody knows that.

NIKKI: Of course! One end is put in the baby's bedroom, the other end somewhere else in the house — there can be a *lot* of receivers — so no matter where the mother or nurse is, she can hear the child in its nursery.

ELLERY: Yes. So, knowing that Mrs. Greenlaw had left the necklace in the nursery and that she'd return at once to get it, knowing that there were witnesses waiting downstairs in the foyer near the open transom of the dining room — where there was an outlet for the radio nurse — our very clever nursemaid and butler took advantage of the gadget to create a wonderful alibi.

NIKKI: They were *acting* that love scene, Ellery?

ELLERY: Yes, Nikki — for the benefit of whoever was listening downstairs. They made only one mistake — they forgot that the sensitive ear of the radio nurse would pick up and broadcast the ticking of the clock on the nursery night-table.

VELIE: Lemme at 'em. A little refined pressure, an' they'll crack.

INSPECTOR: Yes, now that we know whom to tackle, I think we can persuade our friends below-stairs to tell us where they've hidden the ruby. (NIKKI *laughs.*)

ELLERY: Miss Porter finds humor in the situation. Why the laughter, Nikki?

NIKKI: I was just thinking — if you made *up* a detective-story like this, Ellery, your readers would be awfully indignant!

ELLERY: How do you figure that out, Nikki?

NIKKI: Well, isn't it an unwritten law in detective stories that the butler's *never* to be the criminal? (*All laugh, and the music comes up.*)

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HONEYMOON HOUSE

The Characters

ELLERY QUEEN . . . . . *the detective*
NIKKI PORTER . . . . . *his secretary*
INSPECTOR QUEEN . . . . . *his father*
SERGEANT VELIE . . . . . *of the Inspector's staff*
MR. BARRETT, SR. . . . . *head of the B. & B. Firearms Company*
STEVEN BARRETT . . . . . *his son*
JACK BENSON . . . . . *his young partner*
STRYKER . . . . . *Superintendent of the company*
JOYCE KENT . . . . . *Stryker's secretary*
TUTTLE . . . . . *the caretaker of Barrett's Adirondack Lodge*

The Scene

Offices of the B. & B. Firearms Company in New York City — *and* a Lodge in Lake Wingo, in the Adirondacks

SCENE 1: *Executive Office of the B. & B. Firearms Company*

(*It is late at night.* STRYKER *is alone, dictating into a recording machine.*)

STRYKER: (*The quiet executive type*) . . . and as Superintendent of the B. & B. Firearms Company, I cannot conscientiously recommend . . . (*Door opens off.*)

BARRETT: (*A gruff industrialist*) Well, Stryker! (*He stumps in.*) Working late, eh?

STRYKER: Mr. Barrett! We didn't expect you back at the plant until tomorrow morning.

BARRETT: Had to cut my trip short. Got to go to Washington.

STRYKER: Washington — tonight? (*Quietly*) Got a tip, sir . . . eh?

BARRETT: (*Smugly*) Yes, Stryker — the War Department's going to place a big order. (*Curtly*) I'll need those small-arms specifications and the plans of the new Z-5 rifle. . . . (*He opens a filing case.*) Don't bother. Get 'em myself. Uh . . . Stryker.

STRYKER: Yes, Mr. Barrett.

BARRETT: Has young Benson been attending to business?

STRYKER: Well . . . not exactly, sir.

BARRETT: (*Angrily*) What can a man do when his partner dies and leaves a worthless son to take over his partnership! What's the matter with young Jack this

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time? Women?

STRYKER: (*Significantly*) Woman.

BARRETT: You don't mean that irresponsible playboy's taking *one* woman seriously?

STRYKER: Jack Benson and my secretary, Miss Kent, are being married tomorrow at City Hall, Mr. Barrett.

BARRETT: (*Grunts*) Never have believed it of the scamp. Miss Kent, eh? Seductive wench! To take in a brainless boy like him. . . . (*Abruptly*) Stryker, how's my son Steve reacted to this?

STRYKER: Your son, sir? Not very well.

BARRETT: Don't just sit there, Stryker! Is Steve drinking again?

STRYKER: I'm afraid so, Mr. Barrett.

BARRETT: He's a fool! (*Unwillingly*) Sit down, Stryker. Feel I can talk to you. You know, only a few weeks ago my boy Steve wanted to marry that shrewd blonde secretary of yours. . . .

STRYKER: I suspected as much, sir.

BARRETT: Put my foot down. Told Steve flatly she's not his kind. Scheming, dangerous woman. After his money. Warned him if he married her I'd throw him out. And now Jack Benson — my old partner's son and Steve's best friend — is going to marry that same girl! Can't make for anything but trouble between 'em, Stryker.

STRYKER: It's made trouble between them already, Mr. Barrett.

BARRETT: (*Fretfully*) Bad, bad. . . . Damn this Washington trip! Stryker, keep your eyes open, will you? See that Steve doesn't do anything foolish while I'm away?

STRYKER: I'm afraid it may be too late, Mr. Barrett.

BARRETT: (*Blankly*) What d'ye mean?

STRYKER: A . . . strange thing happened at the office today. A few minutes before closing. You know that glass showcase in the main outer office, where we keep that publicity display illustrating the history of various lethal weapons from prehistoric times to the present day?

BARRETT: Yes? Yes?

STRYKER: I left the office for a few minutes, and then came back. In those few minutes, Mr. Barrett — two things disappeared from the showcase!

BARRETT: Two *weapons*, Stryker?

STRYKER: A thirty-eight revolver, and an arrow.

BARRETT: A revolver and an *arrow*!

STRYKER: I checked quietly at once. Well, no one saw anyone open the case, no one had left the office, and the only non-office worker who'd come in during

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the past half-hour was Tuttle, the caretaker of your summer lodge at Lake Wingo.

BARRETT: (*Absently*) I suppose Tuttle's getting the lodge ready for the summer. . . .

STRYKER: Tuttle had dropped into the office to write out a list of supplies he needs — he was the only outsider. Yet someone got away with that revolver and arrow!

BARRETT: (*Harshly*) You mean someone in the office *stole* those two weapons, Stryker.

STRYKER: Looks like it, sir. I watched everyone leave at closing time. It's been a warm day, and none of the men wore topcoats, and the girls — including Miss Kent — were all in suits. But —

BARRETT: No one took a package or bundle out?

STRYKER: No, sir. And when everybody left for the night I locked the door and searched the offices. But — the revolver and arrow *were* gone.

BARRETT: Stryker, did my son . . . (*He stops, awkwardly.*)

STRYKER: I don't know, Mr. Barrett. I've been terribly worried, because the revolver that was stolen . . .

BARRETT: Yes! What about the revolver?

STRYKER: *It was loaded.*

SCENE 2: *The Same, Next Day*

(STEVE BARRETT *enters* STRYKER'S *office.*)

STEVE: (*He is young, a weakling, and tense.*) Well, Stryker?

STRYKER: (*Quietly*) Come in, Steve. Sit down.

STEVE: Cut the oil, Stryker. I'm not in the mood.

STRYKER: Easy, Steve. Jack Benson and Miss Kent will be back from City Hall any minute now to pick up their things and leave on their honeymoon. You and Jack have always been friends, Steve. When your father retires, you'll have to run the B. & B. Firearms Company together. Why don't you go into Jack's office when he and Joyce Kent get back, and show him there are no hard feelings?

STEVE: Why don't you mind your own business, Stryker?

STRYKER: (*Patiently*) Steve, you've been drinking again.

STEVE: The Old Man's sicked you on to me, hasn't he? (*With passion*) What do *you* know about things like this, Stryker? You're an old fossil, like my father! Running the plant — watching costs — a well-oiled machine-gun!

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STRYKER: (*Quietly*) Perhaps I'm not as immune to human feelings as you think, Steve. Joyce Kent is an attractive woman, and she's been my secretary for two years.

STEVE: What? (*Laughs nastily*) Don't tell me *you* fell for that two-timing blonde drip, too! (*Low*) Sorry. I guess I'm shooting off my mouth. (*He steps away.*) See you later.

STRYKER: (*Alarmed*) Where are you going, Steve?

STEVE: (*Shouting*) Out to get drunk!

SCENE 3: *The Outer Offices, Later*

(*There is a babble of congratulations from the office people, glasses, bottles, etc.*, JACK BENSON *and* JOYCE KENT *happily responding.*)

JACK: (*The cocksure playboy*) Thanks, thanks. Another round, everybody. To my bride! (*All toast* JOYCE.)

JOYCE: (*A shrewd, attractive girl — laughing*) Better drink to the groom, people. He'll need it! (*Laughter*) Eh, hon?

STRYKER: (*Entering*) Congratulations, Jack.

JACK: Thanks, Stryker. A drink for Mr. Stryker, Paul! (*A man's response. Glass, bottle.*)

STRYKER: Thanks, Paul. And you, Miss Kent — I mean Mrs. Benson! — (*Laughter*) I hope you and Jack will be very happy.

JOYCE: Oh, thanks, Mr. Stryker. I *know* I'm going to miss taking dictation from you! Aren't I the luckiest darn female in the world! Jack darling — kiss me. (*Cries of "Kiss her!" "Go on,* MR. BENSON*!" "She's your wife now!"*)

JACK: Come and get it, Mrs. B. (*Cries of glee. A door opens.*)

STEVE: (*Entering — very drunk*) Hiiiiii . . . newlyweds! (*First silence, then whisperings: "Uh-uh. Here's* STEVE BARRETT. *And he just saw* JACK BENSON *kissing her." "*STEVE'S *drunk." "Let's get out of here!" The office force gradually disperse,* STEVE *being very "gay."*)

JACK: (*Low*) Steady, Joyce, honey.

JOYCE: (*Low*) Oh, Jack, Steve looks ugly — don't make a scene!

JACK: (*Low*) Don't worry, darling. . . . Hullo, Steve.

STEVE: Hi, Jack! An' the beausheous Mish Kent — I mean, Mishush Benshon! Hi, Mishush Benshun! Congrats!

JOYCE: (*Nervously*) Thanks, Stevie. (*False gaiety*) Champagne! Steve's brought us some champagne, Jack.

JACK: (*Same*) Darned nice of you, Steve.

STEVE: (*Harshly*) Yeah! (*Gayly*) Shtryker, whasha lookin' sho mopy for? Open 'a' champagne, Shtryker! Gotta drink to bride 'n' groom!

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STRYKER: Of course, Steve. (*Pop of cork, sound of glasses, etc.*) Mrs. Benson, Jack . . . Steve . . .

STEVE: Here'sh to won'erful honeymoon! (*They drink. Crash of glass.*) How'm I doin', Shtryker? Good shport, Shteve . . . huh?

STRYKER: (*Humoring him*) Very good, Steve. By the way, Jack. Where are you and Mrs. Benson spending your honeymoon?

JACK: Forgot to tell you. A surprise, wasn't it, dear?

JOYCE: It was simply swell of old Mr. Barrett!

JACK: Steve's dad left a letter on my desk last night — I found it first thing this morning.

STRYKER: He did? I suppose he wrote it after I left.

JOYCE: Isn't it *thoughtful* of Mr. Barrett? He offered Jack and me the use of his Lake Wingo lodge.

JACK: Seems he notified his caretaker, Tuttle, to have the house ready for us. Decent of your father, Steve. Place is ideal. We're driving up tonight.

STEVE: (*Bitterly*) We're awful deshent, we Barrettsh. (*Shouting*) Whadda we waitin' for? Shtryker, gimme 'at champagne! I wanna drink — (*Laughs and cries*) — drink . . . drink . . .

SCENE 4: *An Adirondack Lodge, That Night*

(*A car drives up before the lodge.* JACK *and* JOYCE, *laughing intimately, get out.*)

JACK: This is it, darling. Like it?

JOYCE: (*A little high*) It's beau'ful, Jackie! Whooooooosh! I'm *warm.* Must have been Steve's champagne. 'Member how he kept crying, Jack?

JACK: (*Laughs*) Who cares about Steve? This is *my* night to howl, Babe. (*They mount the porch.*) There's a light burning in the living-room of the lodge. Cosy, huh, dear? (*He knocks impatiently.*) Caretaker Tuttle's apparently received old Barrett's instructions. (*Again.*)

JOYCE: (*Dreamily*) Miss-us Jack Benson . . . Honeymoon House . . . in the *beauuuuu*'ful country . . . surrounded by trees . . . *so* nice an' lonely . . . . Ooooh! I feel good!

JACK: Where *is* Tuttle, anyway? (*Raps again.*)

JOYCE: I hope he's not here. All alone . . . with you. . . .

JACK: (*Hoarsely*) Joyce . . . I'm nuts about you. I . . . (*He tries the knob. The door opens creakily.*) Say! The door wasn't locked at all. Tactful Tuttle! (*Laughs. Closes door.*)

JOYCE: (*Laughing*) Come *on*, Jack! Ooooh, isn't it dark in this foyer?

JACK: There's the light from the living-room over there. Come to Papa, honey

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— you're a bride — I'll carry you over the threshold of the living-room — the way they did it when men were men! (*He picks her up, and she struggles playfully.*)

JOYCE: (*Laughing*) Jack, you *fool*. Jack, you're *carrying* me!

JACK: (*Panting — laughing*) Don't I know it! Here we go . . . !

JOYCE: Oh, Jack, you're so strong — (*A sudden loud revolver shot causes* JOYCE *to scream.* JACK *exclaims. There is a second shot, and a crash of glass as if an electric bulb were shattered.* JOYCE *groans.*)

JACK: (*Hoarsely*) Those two shots — somebody shot out the living-room light. . . . Joyce! Are you all right? (*Pause.*) Joyce! Why are you so . . . *limp?* (*Death-gurgle from* JOYCE.) Joyce . . . ! (*Pause. Hysterical scream.*) *She's dead!* (*Wild laughter, and into . . .*)

SCENE 5: *The Same, Next Day*

(NIKKI *and* SERGEANT VELIE *are seated on the Lodge porch.* ELLERY *is pacing up and down.*)

NIKKI: Ellery Queen, *will* you stop marching up and down this porch? Doesn't he make you nervous, too, Sergeant Velie?

VELIE: You'd think he'd take advantage of bein' out in God's country, Miss Porter. (*Rhapsodically*) Listen to them little birds. (*Deep breath*) Smell this here delicious air. Go on, Mr. Queen — smell it! (NIKKI *laughs.* ELLERY *stops pacing.*)

ELLERY: Can't very well help myself, Sergeant. Why, I've been thinking this case over, Nikki. And a fascinating little puzzle it is.

NIKKI: All *I* can think of is a woman murdered just before her honeymoon began. If that's fascinating, I'm Lady Macbeth.

VELIE: (*Chuckling*) Inspector an' me, we was up in this Lake Wingo district followin' a tip on a gangster we want. When the local constable found out he had a murder-case on his hands, he says to the Inspector: "Inspector Queen," he says, "I got a bad sciaticky t'day," he says, "an' I ain't feelin' up ta snuff," he says. "So — uh — would you an' Sergeant Velie sorta look inta this hommycide fer me?" he says. An' he groans like a sick cow an' pulls the bed-clo'es over his bald head! (VELIE *guffaws.*)

NIKKI: And of course the Inspector just *couldn't* resist.

ELLERY: (*Chuckling*) Naturally not, Nikki. It's in the Queen blood.

VELIE: (*Soberly*) Talkin' about blood, Mr. Queen, that gal in there is one messed-up turtle-dove.

ELLERY: Let's go in and see if Dad's brought her husband around yet. (*As they*

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enter the Lodge) And so the junior partner, Jack Benson, drove down from the offices of the B. & B. Firearms Company late yesterday with his bride, Sergeant?

VELIE: Yeah. This lodge belongs to Mr. Barrett, Senior. He went to Washin'ton last night on bus'ness, but he left a note in the office for Benson to use this place to bill an' coo in on his honeymoon.

NIKKI: Some honeymoon! (*They enter the murder room, where* JACK BENSON *is replying in a dead voice to the grave questions of* INSPECTOR QUEEN.)

ELLERY: Hello, Dad. Got here as fast as we could.

INSPECTOR: Oh, Ellery, Nikki. Excuse me a minute, Mr. Benson. (*Low*) Velie give you all the facts so far, son?

ELLERY: Yes, Dad. What made you call me in on this?

NIKKI: We were a little surprised, Inspector, when Sergeant Velie 'phoned this morning to drive right up here.

INSPECTOR: (*Low chuckle*) You'd never forgive me, son, if I hadn't. This case has its points. Yes, sir — one point in particular!

NIKKI: (*Faintly*) Is . . . that Mrs. Benson's body — that . . . lumpy thing under the sheet there? (VELIE *grunts*) And look at her husband — his face is so *blank*. . . .

ELLERY: Dazed from the shock. Poor chap.

INSPECTOR: I've had a hard time trying to shake him out of it. (*Gentle but firm*) Mr. Benson. (*Pause.*) Mr. Benson!

JACK: (*Dazed*) Yes? What . . . who . . . ?

INSPECTOR: Mr. Benson, try to concentrate. I've got to get the rest of your story, understand? Do you follow me?

JACK: Follow you . . . Yes. I mean . . . Of course, Inspector.

INSPECTOR: (*Gently*) As I get the picture, after the second shot last night, which smashed the living-room electric light, you carried your wife out of the dark living-room into that dining-room across the foyer, switched on the light there, and saw your wife was dead. Right?

JACK: (*Slowly*) Shot through the temple. There was blood — in her hair — on my . . . my coat-collar . . . Joyce's blood. . . . (*He falters. Then he begins to cry.*)

VELIE: Try to get hold o' yourself, Mr. Benson.

NIKKI: (*Damply*) Oh, Ellery, I knew I should have stayed in New York!

ELLERY: (*Gently*) This won't take long, Nikki. Dad, it's obvious the murderer was lying in wait for Mr. and Mrs. Benson in the living-room — needed the light on to see where to shoot when the young couple walked in.

INSPECTOR: Yes. And when he'd killed Mrs. Benson he immediately shot out the

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living-room light so he wouldn't be seen while he made his escape. Mr. Benson — do you think you can go on? (JACK *stops crying.*)

JACK: (*With an effort*) I didn't see him. The — murdering . . . ! (*Pause.*) Sorry. It all happened so fast. . . . I started yelling for Tuttle, the caretaker, but the man wasn't in the house. Then I tried to 'phone for help — but the telephone wires had been cut. I thought I'd go mad. I set my — my wife's body down on the floor and ran out of the lodge. Some . . . crazy idea of getting a doctor. I don't know why. I knew she was dead. I guess I was just . . . just . . .

INSPECTOR: (*Low*) He got a doctor in the village, Ellery, and they drove back here. Doctor's told me the whole yarn. But when they entered the lodge . . . they found *something had happened to Mrs. Benson's body in the meantime.*

NIKKI: (*Shocked*) Something had happened to the . . . *body?*

VELIE: We better get Miss Porter outa here, Mr. Queen.

ELLERY: Nikki. Suppose you take Mr. Benson into the other room while Dad and I have a look at . . . Go on, now.

NIKKI: Something'd happened to . . . (*Shrilly*) Mr. Benson. Please! Let's get out of here! Here — let me take your hand. . . .

JACK: (*Fading*) The arrow . . . there was an arrow. . . . (*Chokes up.* NIKKI *leads him out.*)

ELLERY: Now what's all this, Dad? Body? Arrow? I thought the woman had been *shot* to death!

INSPECTOR: She was, but — Come here, Ellery. Velie, uncover the body and I'll show Ellery that "point" I mentioned.

VELIE: Sure, Inspector. (*He uncovers the corpse. There is a slight exclamation from* ELLERY) The point of an arrow, Mr. Queen!

ELLERY: Plunged into her *heart?*

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) But the village doctor says she was stone-dead when it happened. Cute, eh? Murderer shot her dead, hid himself till Benson ran out of the house — deliberately cut the telephone wire to lure Benson away — then with the coast clear came back and jabbed this arrow into the dead woman's heart.

VELIE: Some fun. Or maybe he did it for exercise.

ELLERY: But *why?* Stabbing a dead woman. (*Abruptly*) Must be psychotic!

INSPECTOR: (*Dryly*) I've been on the phone all morning. Seems this Mrs. Benson — formerly Joyce Kent — left a trail of busted hearts and pocketbooks. Not a very reputable gal. . . . No, son. I figure the arrow in her heart is sort of symbolic.

ELLERY: I see. Killer left the arrow as a symbol of love turned to hate. Dan Cupid

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in reverse, flaunting his murder-motive to the world. It could be.

VELIE: And at least two Romeos we know of wanted this baby doll bad — Steve Barrett, ol' Boom-Boom Barrett's son, and Stryker, the plant superintendent.

INSPECTOR: And Pete knows how many others!

ELLERY: What about this man Tuttle, Dad — the caretaker of the lodge?

INSPECTOR: Haven't located Tuttle yet.

VELIE: If y'ask me, that caretaker oughta be looked over with a high-powered microscope.

INSPECTOR: He will be. Well, Velie, cover her up and we'll chase back to town. (*Grimly*) I want a chin-chin with Mrs. Benson's playmates at the B. & B. offices.

SCENE 6: *The B. & B. Offices, later*

VELIE *is holding off the Press.*

VELIE: No, Inspector Queen *ain't* through with Mr. Stryker yet. Inspector, I'll be out here. (*He slams the door.*)

NIKKI: Those reporters are just like tigers, Ellery.

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) They smell raw meat in *this* story, Nikki.

INSPECTOR: Of course you know, Mr. Stryker, we found this .38 revolver abandoned by Mrs. Benson's murderer in the living-room of the Lake Wingo Lodge.

STRYKER: (*Wearily*) I know, Inspector.

NIKKI: And no fingerprints — the tricky devil!

ELLERY: You identify this revolver, Mr. Stryker, as the one stolen from your office showcase here?

STRYKER: Yes, Mr. Queen.

INSPECTOR: How about this arrow we found stuck in the dead woman's heart, Stryker? Here — take a good look at it!

STRYKER: Please! I'm upset — the shock —

ELLERY: Thirty inches long, half an inch thick, one of its three feathers missing, the other two crushed. Is this the arrow that was stolen from the B. & B. office?

STRYKER: (*Strained*) Yes. Yes! But the feathers were all right when I saw the arrow in the showcase.

NIKKI: No prints on the arrow, either. Whoever killed Mrs. Benson's been taking lessons from detective stories.

INSPECTOR: That's all for now, Mr. Stryker. Sit down over there. (STRYKER *obeys.*) Steven Barrett!

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STEVE: (*Hoarsely*) You want me, Inspector?

INSPECTOR: Depends. You look pooped, my boy. Hangover?

STEVE: I'm in a fog. Had too much to drink yesterday. All I can think of is . . . Joyce is dead. She's *dead.*

INSPECTOR: Let's see if we can't blow that fog away. (*He takes* STEVE *aside.*) Now think hard . . .

NIKKI: What about their alibis, Ellery?

ELLERY: They have none. This boy Steve Barrett seems to have been too drunk to remember. Stryker claims he worked very late at the office here last night, alone. The caretaker hasn't been located at all — (VELIE *shows* BARRETT, SR., *in.*)

VELIE: Here's Mr. Barrett, Senior, Inspector — just flew in from Washin'ton!

BARRETT: (*He is agitated, curt*) Out of my way! Steve!

STEVE: Hullo, Father.

BARRETT: Steve, look at me! Did you kill that girl?

STEVE: Did . . . *I* kill her!

BARRETT: If you shot the girl, son, tell me. I'll pull you through. But I've got to have the truth, Steve!

INSPECTOR: (*Angrily*) *You'll* do *what?* Mr. Barrett, if your son is guilty, no amount of pull —

BARRETT: I'm not talking to you. Steve! Answer me!

STEVE: (*Weakly*) I . . . don't think so, Father. All I remember about last night is . . . I was plastered. It's all foggy. . . .

INSPECTOR: That'll be enough! (*The door opens off.*) Well, Velie? (*Slam of door.*) Who's this?

VELIE: (*Entering with* TUTTLE) Our missin' boy-friend, Inspector. Tuttle, Mr. Barrett's caretaker at the lodge. He just walked into the office under his own steam.

INSPECTOR: Zat so? Sit down here, Tuttle.

TUTTLE: (*He is a middle-aged, frightened man*) Yes, sir. Evening, Mr. Barrett. Isn't it awful about —

BARRETT: Tuttle, I want a word with you!

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) You won't get it, Mr. Barrett. Yes, Velie? Why all the signals?

VELIE: (*Low*) This report, Inspector. It's a check-up on this caretaker Tuttle. Read it!

INSPECTOR: (*Softly*) Fast work. Let's have it, Velie. (*He reads*) Hmmm . . .

NIKKI: (*Aside to* ELLERY) Tuttle doesn't look like a criminal, Ellery. With that crippled foot, and that scared mushy look. . . .

ELLERY: Judging from the expression on dad's face, Nikki, that report on Tuttle

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must pack dynamite.

INSPECTOR: (*Soft*) Tuttle. This report claims that until a few years ago you worked for Mr. Barrett Senior as a munitions salesman. How come you're now caretaker of Mr. Barrett's Lake Wingo Lodge? Come-down, isn't it?

TUTTLE: Yes, sir. I had a bad auto accident. Injured my foot. I've had to use this cane to help me walk ever since.

BARRETT: (*Sharply*) What's all this nonsense? Tuttle couldn't continue as a salesman — had to do something for him — gave him the caretaker's job.

INSPECTOR: (*Ignoring* BARRETT) Tuttle, are you married?

TUTTLE: N-no, sir. Divorced. After my accident.

INSPECTOR: That's what this report says. Where's your ex-wife?

TUTTLE: I don't know, sir. It's been so long —

INSPECTOR: Wife's maiden name.

TUTTLE: Kent, Joyce Kent, sir — (*Exclamations all around.*)

INSPECTOR: (*Sharp*) I suppose you didn't know your ex-wife's been working in this very office under her maiden name, Tuttle! (TUTTLE: "No, Sir. No, *Sir!*") You didn't know she was the bride Jack Benson was bringing to the Barrett lodge on their honeymoon, did you?

TUTTLE: (*Wildly*) Then she's the one who was — I didn't! I swear I didn't know what had become of her!

INSPECTOR: Tuttle, where were you last night?

TUTTLE: In N-N-New York — in New Y-Y-York. . . .

INSPECTOR: Why weren't you on the job in the Barrett Lodge at Lake Wingo, where you were supposed to be?

TUTTLE: But . . . I got a letter from Mr. Barrett Senior, telling me to meet him in New York last night. Here it is. . . .

BARRETT: A letter from *me?* Let me see that letter!

TUTTLE: That's why I drove up to New York, Mr. Barrett. When you didn't show up I couldn't understand it. (BARRETT *examines the letter.*)

BARRETT: No wonder! Inspector Queen, this *looks* like my signature, but *I never wrote this letter.*

INSPECTOR: A plant . . . to lure Tuttle off the Lake Wingo Lodge grounds.

ELLERY: (*Sharply*) Mr. Barrett, did you write a note to young Benson, offering the newlyweds the use of your lodge for their honeymoon?

BARRETT: Letter to young Jack? What are you talking about?

INSPECTOR: You didn't leave a note for Benson on his desk before you left here the other night for Washington?

BARRETT: Of course not!

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) Dad, let me see the two letters Mr. Barrett allegedly wrote.

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. . . (*He examines them thoughtfully.*)

NIKKI: It gets more mixed up every minute.

VELIE: I'm about ready to fold my tent like the — who?

ELLERY: (*Absently*) Arab, Sergeant. Dad, if you'll compare the signatures on the Tuttle and Benson letters, you'll find them identical.

INSPECTOR: Let's see . . . Right, right. Exact duplications.

ELLERY: And since no one ever writes his signature *exactly the same way twice*, these letters are obvious forgeries. Both written on Mr. Barrett's "Office of the President" stationery, so I should judge the signatures were traced from an authentic signature stolen from the office files here.

NIKKI: Someone wanted desperately to get Mrs. Benson out to that lodge, to kill her. But why the *lodge?*

INSPECTOR: It's too much for me, this crazy case.

ELLERY: I'm afraid it's too much for me, too. (*He sighs.*)

NIKKI: (*Astounded*) You mean — you can't solve it, Ellery?

VELIE: The maestro's stymied? I don't believe it!

INSPECTOR: Oh, cut it out, you two. There's only one thing we can be sure of. Killer's plan revolved about four things — the stolen gun, the stolen arrow, Barrett's personal office stationery, and Barrett's signature.

NIKKI: And all four were stolen *from this office.*

VELIE: But *anybody* in this office coulda swiped them!

ELLERY: (*Suddenly*) Just the same . . . I have a theory.

INSPECTOR: Fat lot of good a theory's going to do.

ELLERY: Mind you, Dad, I can't be *positive* —

VELIE: You — you — You-topia! Ellery Queen can't be positive!

NIKKI: (*Giggling*) I never thought I'd live to see the day.

ELLERY: (*Grimly*) But the theory follows certain facts we all know. Come into a private office, Dad, and I'll explain. If my theory's correct, it will not only tell us who shot Mrs. Benson, but give us the evidence to convict her murderer, too.

This is a departure from MR. QUEEN'S *usual "challenge" to his readers and listeners. This time he cannot make a cut-and-dried solution; he can only conjecture. But his conjecture follows the most logical theorizing. Can you tell what* ELLERY QUEEN'S *theory is? Who do you think killed* MRS. JACK BENSON, *nee* JOYCE KENT? *Trying to solve "The Adventure of Honeymoon House" before* ELLERY QUEEN *reveals the answer will add to your enjoyment of this mystery radio drama.*

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SOLUTION

Scene 7: *A Private Office, Immediately After*

INSPECTOR: All right, all right. Now that we're alone, Ellery, let's have this "theory" of yours.

ELLERY: Let's agree on the fundamental: The theft of the revolver and arrow from these offices was *premeditated.*

NIKKI: Planned in advance? Of course. It must have been.

VELIE: So what?

ELLERY: Then hasn't it struck you that *the murderer couldn't risk being seen taking away those two weapons?*

INSPECTOR: If he'd been seen, he'd have been tied to the murder the minute it was discovered. What's the point, son?

ELLERY: This, Dad: Getting the gun out of the office was simple — a revolver fits into any convenient pocket. *But where did the murderer conceal the arrow?* How did the murderer get that arrow out of the B. & B.-offices *without its being noticed?* The arrow is thirty inches long — two and a half feet. And Mr. Stryker said no one left the office carrying a bundle or package of any kind — that no one wore a topcoat because of the warm day. So I ask: Where did the thief conceal that arrow when he walked out of here that day? In his pocket?

NIKKI: An arrow two and a half feet long? Don't be silly!

ELLERY: Nor in a man's trouser, nor under a man's jacket or a woman's skirt. Then how? We're dealing with a clever criminal — one who planned each step of his crime in advance, as those two forged letters show. So I advance this theory: *The murderer eliminated beforehand the slightest risk of being seen in possession of the arrow.*

INSPECTOR: Sounds reasonable, son. But where does it get you?

ELLERY: Well, what would a careful, clever thief do? Obviously he'd take with him some *container* in which to conceal the stolen arrow and carry it out — some innocent-looking receptacle everyone would take for granted and which would pass unnoticed.

VELIE: That clicks with me okay, Mr. Queen.

ELLERY: Can we deduce the approximate size and shape of such an arrow receptacle? Yes, we can. More than two and a half feet long, of course. Also, since we know two of the three feathers on the arrow were crushed, the receptacle is only slightly thicker than the half-inch-thick shaft of the arrow itself — say about an inch thick, then.

NIKKI: A tubular container more than two and a half feet long, an inch thick,

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and wouldn't attract attention. . . .

ELLERY: Have we such an object in this case? We have! *Mr. Barrett's caretaker Tuttle* — divorced by the dead woman after the accident which crippled him for life — and I suppose hating her ever after for her desertion! — *Tuttle, the caretaker, carries such an object. . . . his cane*, which he himself said he uses constantly to help him walk!

INSPECTOR: Velie, go out there and snag Tuttle's cane!

VELIE: With pleasure! (*He runs out.*)

NIKKI: So *that's* why you said it was just a theory, Ellery.

ELLERY: Yes, Nikki. It stands or falls by an examination of Tuttle's cane. But the facts making my theory possible are so powerful I'm sure we'll find I've been right.

INSPECTOR: (*Grimly*) If you are, we'll find that the tip of the cane unscrews and the inside's hollow.

ELLERY: I think you'll also find evidence, Dad.

NIKKI: What kind of evidence, Ellery?

ELLERY: Remember one of the arrow's feathers is *missing?* How could that be? It could be if a splinter of wood inside the hollow cane *caught one feather* while Tuttle was pulling the arrow out of the cane to thrust into Mrs. Benson's body. (VELIE *re-enters.*)

NIKKI: *Then the missing feather must still be inside the cane!*

INSPECTOR: Velie! *Give* me that shillelagh!

VELIE: Here it is, Inspector!

INSPECTOR: We'll know in a second . . . (*He twists the cane.*) It *does* unscrew.

NIKKI: It *is* hollow!

ELLERY: And there *is* an arrow-feather caught inside!

INSPECTOR: Velie, go into that next room and arrest Tuttle for the murder of Joyce Kent Tuttle Benson.

(*The music comes up.*)

THE END

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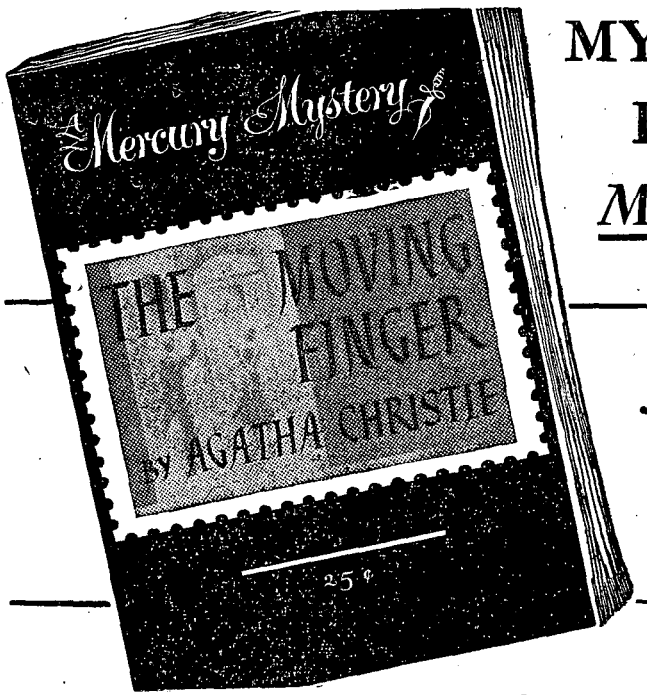

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